

Fort Navajo – Chapter 11

"In theory, yes. You turn the soil, disk it, drag it and then plant it. It will take one heck of a lot of water. When it's done growing, you harvest it. Derek knows how to raise bees."

"I should be able to get some horses from the Res."

"Dad you ride horses, don't you?"

"The last time was in 1976, thank you. I'll stick to the ATV."

Perhaps the finest horse riders were the Nez Perce. They were from somewhere in the Northwest. Their cavalry tactics rivaled those of the American Army. "We, the Nez Perce people, call ourselves Nimi'ipuu, which means the 'real people' or 'we the people'." I'm not Nez Perce but I do wish I could ride like they do. Salina and I get along just fine; she knows who the boss is. I named her after that horse I rode in 1976.

"What are we going to do with the HETS?"

"I have no idea, Derek, what do you want to do with it?"

"I think that Mary and I should take a trip."

"Where are you going?"

"Ft. Irwin."

"What are you going to get?" (As if I needed to ask.)

"An M1A1."

"Don't forget the bullets. You had better see if you can find a trailer load of JP-8 while you're there. They use a lot of fuel don't they?"

"Yep. Do you want to ride along?"

"Uh..."

"Here, have a coke."

"Yeah, I'll go, I was just deciding."

There you go; did I ever get a tank in any of my previous stories? Probably, but I can't remember. I wore my dress up hat, the black one. Plus jeans, my zip up Laredo's and my Laredoan rig. It was dress up so I wore a white shirt and my vest. Oh yeah, I brought the Winchester and a couple of boxes of .45 Colt ammo. I looked in the mirror and

laughed before I realized I was looking at myself. I suppose I should tell you that the odds and ends have an alternative spelling, SINCGARS. They are also known as M14s.

I really was trying to learn Spanish, without much success. Anyway, he found a M1A1 with low engine hours and we put it on the HETS. On the way back, we stopped at MCLB Barstow and picked up enough ammo to finish filling the trailer. It never really did get warm during the summer of 2009. We planted potatoes anyway and got something of a crop. The 2 CFVs went to the Navajo tribe along with some of the odds and ends. They paid us back in firewood, about 50 cords worth. Very few of them smoked Kool's, but they had them and included a full case, 60 cartons.

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The Phases of a Disaster

There are 3 phases of the disaster response: pre-event planning, response to the event, and post event restoration. The aim of each phase is to optimize the response and reduce potential losses.

Pre-event Phase: Planning and Prevention

The pre-event phase is defined by anticipation, planning, and training for potential adversities. We must continually rethink both the estimation of the risk and our response to it to ensure a reliable response and we must expect setbacks and have contingency plans to counteract them.

The primary objective of this phase of the disaster response is vulnerability reduction. Long before the event, risks are identified and defined; preventative measures are attempted; and response plans are developed and practiced. This phase revolves around a comprehensive risk assessment and measures of risk reduction, the basic concept behind disaster mitigation. Simply put, preparation reduces both the likelihood and consequences of disasters.

The cornerstone of disaster preparation is an estimation of risk. It is not feasible to plan for every contingency of every possible threat. There must be a prioritization to focus on the greatest risk and greatest benefit with allocation of resources based on the likelihood of the threat balanced with potential loss. Low-likelihood threats that have the highest potential for losses obtain the most attention. These threats are unpredictable but potentially devastating. It is difficult to sustain preparation for events that have a low likelihood of occurring or to plan and train without a defined threat. Pre-event planning must account for cost-effectiveness and balance the allocation of resources for improbable events vs. the risks of not being prepared.

The medical response to disasters must be planned and trained long before the event occurs. Because the outcome, timing, or location of any event cannot be reliably predicted, plans must remain flexible to allow for a competent response to different disas-

ters and adapt to different contingencies or various situations. Pre-event assumptions must be made but should not restrict the execution of the plan. Training cannot be over-emphasized. This training should use an interdisciplinary approach and incorporate both medical planners and the numerous agencies functioning as first responders. Each responding unit should have identified roles and responsibilities to prevent excessive overlapping and parallel efforts. In addition, there should be 1 clearly defined chain of command, usually the lead federal agency, to ensure proper command and control to optimize the functioning of the responding organizations and proper execution of the response plan. The goal of pre-event planning and training is to ensure an adequate, competent, and flexible response that will satisfy the acute needs resulting from the disaster while still meeting baseline demands of the affected community.

An important aspect of the preparation phase is to use preventative strategies when possible. These include the development and implementation of early warning systems, improved barrier protection, and enhanced security measures. In response to emerging infections, expanded disease understanding and diagnostic capabilities along with continued vaccine development can minimize the burden of disease. Likewise, increase public awareness through education and information dissemination (without causing unnecessary panic) can also assist with prevention, containment, and mitigation.

Integration and Forming a Disaster Network

The US National Disaster Response Plan directs that we be prepared to react to multiple, simultaneous, and unrelated events. We are faced with numerous types of threats that can result in numerous possible outcomes. The formation of a disaster network, or a pre-established and readily available consortium of subject matter experts that can provide guidance and assistance based on specific needs, would facilitate the disaster response.

Integration of disaster preparedness must be brought to the local level. The best plan is ineffective if it is not properly executed or able to adapt and continue to function despite losses. The disaster medicine community must adopt the concept of the business continuity plan used by industry to minimize disruption of normal operations despite the disorder following disasters. A disaster can cripple the delivery of healthcare through decreased infrastructure in the face of increased demands that now exceed capabilities. Hospitals must maintain operational effectiveness with minimal interruptions despite the potential loss of infrastructure and personnel. This is a true marker of resiliency.

Event Phase: The Medical Response

While the plans for the disaster response are detailed during the pre-event phase, they must be properly executed to achieve the goals of disaster mitigation. Disasters may strike with little or no warning and cause damages that limit or prevent an aid response. **Despite adequate preparation, these events can easily overwhelm the healthcare system.** A well-developed and executed plan for the delivery of aid, sustenance, and medical care may be the most useful tool to minimize losses and preserve lives. Given

this, the healthcare community must be familiar with local and federal disaster management plans as it will be called upon to be the first line of care during these situations.

Medical treatment facilities provide immediate support of local efforts. Certain predestinated facilities provide health and medical services at the request of the lead federal agency in support of the Federal Response Plan. These facilities are required to have a Hospital Emergency Incident Command System as well as a defined plan to respond to hazmat incidences, CBRNE events (chemical, biological, radio-nuclear and high-energy explosions), natural disasters, mass casualties, and industrial or transportation accidents. These facilities may also be called to provide support for planned events and search and rescue operations. Obviously, these designated facilities must plan and train for potential threats. However, all medical treatment facilities may be called upon in times of need and must be prepared.

For healthcare providers to effectively respond to disasters, they must be familiar with their facility's and regional response plan as well as their role in it. The local response to a disaster should revolve around the plan outlined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which incorporates 12 emergency support functions: transportation, communication, public works and engineering, firefighting, information and planning, mass casualty care, resource support, health and medical services, search and rescue, hazmat containment and removal, food, and energy. There must be a sense of interdependency among the responding agencies to ensure a coordinated response. (Right, like they did in New Orleans with advance knowledge.)

The medical response may involve multiple simultaneous threats. However, while simultaneous events may occur (multiple separate terrorist attacks, simultaneous natural disasters, etc.), it is more likely that 1 disaster will result in secondary events. For example, the destruction of a hurricane may cause damage to an industrial plant or toxin storage facility. Furthermore, the effects of natural disasters do not end with the primary or even secondary events. The collapse of the local infrastructure impairs evacuation and relief efforts and leads to a decreased capacity at time of increased demand. Basic needs to support life are compromised and resources to treat chronic medical conditions may not exist.

The emergence of infectious diseases resulting from the loss of adequate hygiene, housing, and basic sanitation lead to further morbidity and mortality. The disaster response faces numerous challenges and, despite impaired resources, must provide shelter, hygiene, food, water, clothing, medications, medical care, and basic sanitation to the victims. It must also support the removal of bodies, animal carcasses, and waste; search and rescue operations; and evacuation and relocation services while maintaining a steady and reliable supply chain. Meanwhile, the maintenance of security for the victims and relief workers must be ensured.

Postevent Phase: Restoration

Ongoing mitigation efforts must be continued even after resolution of the event and its aftermath. The recovery process needs to start immediately to restore normalcy and function as quickly as possible. In this phase, the affected community must be rebuilt and efforts made to reduce future risks. As much as 10% to 15% of the gross national product of developing nations is devoted to restoration following disasters, further limiting needed resources. Homes must be rebuilt with better construction and locations to reduce future vulnerabilities. Following a disaster, reflection and process auditing regarding pre-event preparations and the ensuing response must be critically evaluated to decrease future risks and improve future responses.

A nuclear war isn't a natural disaster. Even if they figured out how to deal with natural disasters, which apparently they hadn't, it didn't have a lot to do with the present situation. Of all the people who survived the attacks, those best prepared to deal with the aftermath were the Native Americans. And then, we went and armed them with CFVs and munitions.

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"Gunny, are we the last people alive in this country?"

"Nah. I think everyone is laying low."

"Why? What else could anyone do to us?"

"Repeat after me, "Mi nombre es Gary.

"¿Cuál es su nombre?"

"Mi nombre es Gary."

"Not bad for an old man."

"Who are you calling old?"

"You."

"Oh. Wantta fight?"

"Give me a minute while I tied one hand behind my back."

"Is it really that bad?"

"Yep."

Screw him, I went and practiced shooting down helicopters with my Tac-50 rifle. They did that in 'Pax', I think. The only difference was they hit what they were shooting at. I

got a big sheet of cardboard and painted what sort looked like a helicopter. I was shooting at it from 1,000-yards. One out of ten isn't good, right?

The smart thing to have done would have been to sit outside and wait for the incoming weapons. I wasn't going to further the species and what knowledge I had locked inside my brain was just that, locked. I could barely hit the broadside of a barn from the inside. Within each of us exists a survival instinct and when we're afraid, it kicks in. They call it fight or flight. I'd remember the strangest things at the strangest times. Most of it was experiences I'd had, usually bad.

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Dementia is a decline of reasoning, memory, and other mental abilities (the cognitive functions). This decline eventually impairs the ability to carry out everyday activities such as driving; household chores; and even personal care such as bathing, dressing, and feeding (often called activities of daily living, or ADLs).

- Dementia is most common in elderly people; it used to be called senility and was considered a normal part of aging.
- We now know that dementia is not a normal part of aging but is caused by a number of underlying medical conditions that can occur in both elderly and younger persons.
- In some cases, dementia can be reversed with proper medical treatment. In others, it is permanent and usually gets worse over time.

About 4-5 million people in the United States have some degree of dementia, and that number will increase over the next few decades with the aging of the population.

- Dementia affects about 1% of people aged 60-64 years and as many as 30-50% of people older than 85 years.
- It is the leading reason for placing elderly people in institutions such as nursing homes.
- Dementia is a very serious condition that results in significant financial and human costs.
- Many people with dementia eventually become totally dependent on others for their care.
- Although people with dementia typically remain fully conscious, the loss of short- and long-term memory are universal.
- People with dementia also experience declines in any or all areas of intellectual functioning, for example, use of language and numbers; awareness of what is going on around him or her; judgment; and the ability to reason, solve problems, and think abstractly.
- These losses not only impair a person's ability to function independently, but also have a negative impact on quality of life and relationships.

Many older people fear that they are developing dementia because they cannot find their glasses or remember someone's name.

- These very common problems are most often due to a much less serious condition involving slowing of mental processes with age.
- Medical professionals call this "benign senescent forgetfulness," or "age-related memory loss."
- Although this condition is a nuisance, it does not impair a person's ability to learn new information, solve problems, or carry out everyday activities, as dementia does.

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Alzheimer's disease is a condition in which nerve cells in the brain die, making it difficult for the brain's signals to be transmitted properly. A person with Alzheimer's disease has problems with memory, judgment, and thinking, which makes it hard for the person to work or take part in day-to-day life. The death of the nerve cells occurs gradually over a period of years.

Once thought to be rare, Alzheimer's disease is the leading cause of dementia.

Most patients' symptoms progress slowly over a number of years. Symptoms may not be noticed early on. Sometimes, it is only when family members look back that they realize when the changes started to occur.

Common symptoms of Alzheimer's disease include:

- Impaired memory and thinking. The person has difficulty remembering things or learning new information. In the later stages of the disease, long-term memory loss occurs, which means that the person can't remember personal information, such as his or her place of birth or occupation, or names of close family members.
- Disorientation and confusion. People with Alzheimer's disease may get lost when out on their own and may not be able to remember where they are or how they got there. They may not recognize previously familiar places and situations. They also may not recognize familiar faces or know what time of the day it is, or even what year it is.
- Misplacing things. The person forgets where he or she put things used every day, such as glasses, a hearing aid, keys, etc. The person may also put things in strange places, such as leaving their glasses in the refrigerator.
- Abstract thinking. People with Alzheimer's disease may find certain tasks – such as balancing a checkbook – more difficult than usual. For example, they might forget what the numbers mean and what needs to be done with them.
- Trouble performing familiar tasks. The person begins to have difficulty performing daily tasks, such as eating, dressing, and grooming. Planning for normal day-to-day tasks is also impaired.
- Changes in personality and behavior. The person becomes unusually angry, irritable, restless, or quiet. At times, people with Alzheimer's disease can become confused, paranoid, or fearful.
- Poor or decreased judgment. People with Alzheimer's disease may leave the house on a cold day without a coat or shoes, or could go to the store wearing their pajamas.

- Inability to follow directions. The person has difficulty understanding simple commands or directions. The person may get lost easily and begin to wander.
- Problems with language and communication. The person can't recall words, name objects (even ones that are very familiar to them – like a pen), or understand the meaning of common words.
- Impaired visual and spatial skills. The person loses spatial abilities (the ability to judge shapes and sizes, and the relationship of objects in space) and can't arrange items in a certain order or recognize shapes.
- Loss of motivation or initiative. The person may become very passive and require prompting to become involved and interact with others.
- Loss of normal sleep patterns. The person may sleep during the day and be wide-awake at night.

It is important to visit a doctor if you or a loved one experiences any of these symptoms so you can receive the proper evaluation and diagnosis. There are other conditions – such as depression, a head injury, certain chemical imbalances, or the effects of some medications – that can produce symptoms that are similar to Alzheimer's disease. Many of these conditions are treatable.

Your doctor can only determine if the symptoms are probably due to Alzheimer's disease after a thorough medical, psychiatric, and neurological evaluation. He will evaluate other possible causes of dementia to rule out all other factors before settling on Alzheimer's disease as a diagnosis.

Currently, no definitive diagnostic test for Alzheimer's exists. A definite diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is possible only after death, when a pathologist can more closely examine a patient's brain for the telltale changes associated with Alzheimer's disease.

The course of Alzheimer's disease varies widely from person to person. The duration of the illness could be short (2-3 years) or long (up to 20 years). Usually the parts of the brain that control memory and thinking are affected first, but over time, cells die in other areas of the brain.

Eventually, a person with Alzheimer's will need complete care. If the person has no other serious illnesses, the loss of brain function itself will eventually cause death.

Because the exact cause of Alzheimer's disease is not known, there is currently nothing that can be done to guarantee its prevention. Some interventions may be worth incorporating into your life as more research reveals some potentially controllable risk factors. Staying mentally and physically active, maintaining a normal blood pressure and avoiding head injury by wearing seat belts and helmets may decrease your chances of developing Alzheimer's dementia.

It is important to remember, however, that there are causes of dementia other than Alzheimer's disease that may be preventable such as eating properly, exercising, quitting

smoking, and limiting how much alcohol you drink. Your doctor can advise you about other healthy lifestyle habits you can adopt that may help prevent dementia.

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Senile? Maybe. Alzheimer's disease? Not likely. Depressed? Everyone was. The world as we knew it had ended. It wasn't coming back for a very long time, if ever. TEO-CAWKI. Until now, it was just an acronym. The reality of our situation gripped us in a vise like grip. How many people had I heard in my lifetime that said, if it happened, they didn't want to live through it? They were overlooking the fight or flight response. That was ingrained into our very being. We'd fled the devastation. Now we were going to have to fight to survive. It can't get any more real than that.

I can't tell when nuclear winter ended. The sky cleared, but it was still colder than a witch's you know what. We didn't do any more foraging for supplies. Any city of any size had been wiped out. Smaller communities that did survive didn't want visitors. We made a run down to Show Low. The purpose of the trip was to visit the Fleetwood dealer. We didn't even get into town before we ran into a roadblock. We weren't threatening, we had Mary's pickup. Those fellas on the roadblock didn't seem to care. It was obvious that they'd been to the armory. We left rather than start something we couldn't finish.

Couldn't finish? That wasn't exactly so, but it would have meant starting something we didn't want to. Hadn't enough people already died? Weren't enough more people going to die before things normalized without our help? If we didn't start trouble, maybe it wouldn't come looking for us. But, if it did, they'd better have armor, we did.

One Stryker and one Abrams tank do not a Brigade make. You had to start somewhere and there weren't many of us. The only one of us who knew anything about tanks was Derek. He had held all jobs, driver, loader, gunner and commander. None of us knew much about the Stryker. This led us to do a little recruiting up on the Res. We needed someone who had been in the Army and knew about the Stryker.

You did know that the US Navy named ships after Randy Shughart and Gary Gordon didn't you? Nice gesture since they weren't sailors. Their widows' were the ships sponsors.

Present. Arms!
Order. Arms!

The old tribal feud between the Navajo and Hopi didn't seem so important now. We ended up with some men from each tribe that either knew the Stryker or the M1A1 Abrams. It wasn't a big deal because many of the people who live on the Res live in mobile homes. It would, however seriously overload our wind turbines. I didn't really want to hook them up to the generator because I wasn't certain where we'd get more propane.

We obviously needed something a bit bigger. Only 3 places came to mind, Kansas, Tehachapi and Palm Springs. There were wind turbines up by Tracy, California but Palm Springs and Tehachapi were closer. We opted to get a group together and try Palm Springs. My only concern was the Marine MCAGCC at 29 Palms. That probably got hit. When everyone was up to speed on their training, the Abrams tank was loaded aboard the HETS and it and the Stryker set off for Palm Springs. Derek told me he was leaving me behind in case we were attacked by helicopters. I immediately saw through that; he figured I'd just be in the way. My sole instruction was to get a 'big one' and all of the ancillary equipment. I also said, "Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes."

"Dad, we have to shoot before then, the shells won't arm themselves."

"These shells need to be armed? Use canister rounds."

I think he was pulling my leg. They loaded 5 rounds of sabot, 15 rounds of canister and 20 rounds of HEAT. They also took the front half of a tanker loaded with JP-8. I asked how they were going to get the wind turbine home and Damon laughed an evil sounding laugh. Spare rounds for the tanks went into the trailer the Hummer was pulling.

They told me they were going to Needles and then Blythe and finally Palm Springs. If you know the road from Blythe to Palm Springs, you have some idea what they were up against. Personally, I think Derek wanted to visit the Patton Museum at Chiriaco Summit.

I also knew about that big solar array at 29 Palms, but I sort of figured that the EMP had taken it out. That was just a wild guess. The reason I knew about it was the last time we stole wind turbines from Palm Springs, one of the Squirrels mentioned it. There simply aren't that many places with a lot of wind turbines. Neither are there many military depots close by. The Marine Corps has two MCLBs: Barstow, California and Albany, Georgia. I have no idea where the Army depots are and the internet is down. What I know about are Navajo Depot and Hawthorne, Nevada. I really don't believe it would be a good idea to drive around on *The Day After* and ask, "Hey, have you seen an Army Depot around here anywhere?"

Uh-duh. I don't think so. They sort of left me to guard the women. I was hoping the women were guarding me. I was torn between being a cowboy and a 'soldier'. 'Soldier' won and I got my PT1911 .45 and my M1A Super Match. The deciding factor was the reload time. Neither the Winchester nor the SAA revolvers were fast reloads. I got Amy to help me set up a folding table and proceeded to set up my weapons: M1A rifle, Tac-50 rifle and a Mini-14. I set up 2 Claymores and plopped my butt in a chair. I looked at those Claymores and begin to wonder, was that curved side in or curved side out? I'd done it right. But then, both sides were curved, weren't they?

Fort Navajo – Chapter 12

I had, however, read Army Field Manual FM 23-23, *Antipersonnel Mine M18A1 and M18 (Claymore)* and I do believe the other people were 'Enemy'. I had to get that one right the very first time. Hey, the Air Force don't teach you nothing about Claymore Mines, or at least they didn't in 19 and 61. They did show us a M16, once. We weren't allowed to touch it but we did get to see what they looked like.

Since his days growing up in Tampa, Fla., the lanky kid with the slightly mischievous smile had wanted to be a soldier. By this bright morning, April 4, 2003, Sgt. First Class Paul Ray Smith had more than fulfilled his dream. He had served 15 of his 33 years in the US Army, including three tours of duty in harm's way – in the Persian Gulf, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Now all his training, all his experience, all the instincts that had made him a model soldier, were about to be put to the test. With 16 men from his First Platoon, B Company, 11th Engineer Battalion, Sgt. Smith was under attack by about 100 troops of the Iraqi Republican Guard.

"We're in a world of hurt," he muttered.

That "world" was a dusty, triangular walled compound about half the size of a football field, near the Saddam Hussein International Airport, 11 miles from Baghdad. Sgt. Smith's engineers, or "sappers," had broken through the 10-foot-high concrete-block southern wall with a military bulldozer and begun turning the compound into a temporary "pen" for Iraqi prisoners as U.S. forces pressed their attack on the airport.

While they were working, guards posted at a small aluminum gate in the north corner of the triangle had spotted the large Iraqi force approaching the compound from the north and west. Sgt. Smith had just run up to join the guards when all hell broke loose. They came under furious fire from machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars.

The lightly armed work detail needed fire support. Sgt. Smith called for a Bradley fighting vehicle. Within minutes the tank-like Bradley roared through the breached wall and broke through the aluminum gate, taking a position just beyond it and opening up on the attackers with its rapid-fire 25mm Bushmaster cannon.

Sgt. Smith's men took positions around the Bradley. He could see Iraqi soldiers north, east and west of him, streaming out along his flanks. He called for a nearby M-113 armored personnel carrier, to give additional fire support with its M2 .50-caliber heavy machine gun.

As the APC passed through the breached wall, its commander, Sgt. Louis Berwald, realized that flanking Iraqi troops had occupied a roofed guard tower to his left, just outside the southwest corner of the compound, and were firing from it. He raked the tower

with his M2, then moved on through the compound to a point just outside the north gate behind the Bradley.

By now the Iraqis were concentrating their fire against Sgt. Smith's small force by the gate. An RPG round hit the Bradley, and at almost the same moment a mortar round hit the APC, wounding its three occupants.

Several additional RPG rounds hit the Bradley, which by now had run low on ammunition. The Bradley retreated through the compound, exiting south through the breached wall. With one armored vehicle gone and the other out of action, Sgt. Smith's men had lost any firepower advantage they might have had.

Sgt. Smith could have withdrawn as well, back south through the compound. But beyond it was a lightly defended aid station crowded with 100 combat casualties and medical personnel. To protect it from being overrun, Sgt. Smith chose to fight no matter what the odds.

Under intense fire, Sgt. Smith's men heroically extracted all three wounded crewmen from the APC. Sgt. Smith then entered the vehicle, ordering Spc. Michael Seaman to join him as driver and "keep me loaded" with ammo belts. Sgt. Smith popped up out of the turret hatch and grabbed the grips of the .50-caliber machine gun mounted on top.

The Iraqis were practically on top of him. Coolly grasping the situation, Sgt. Smith ordered Spc. Seaman to back the APC south into the compound to a position half way down the eastern wall. There he could arc the big machine gun back and forth, from the gate entrance to the north, all along the western wall of the triangle, to the Iraqi occupied tower in the southwest corner to his left.

To fire the machine gun, Sgt. Smith had to stand in the APC's main hatch, his body exposed from the waist up to a withering fire coming at him from three directions. On the ground through the blur of combat, Sgt. Matthew Keller saw Sgt. Smith grimly firing measured bursts from atop the APC even as a hail of bullets hit around him.

Sgt. Keller yelled at him to get out. Sgt. Smith looked back at him and with a slight shake of his head, made a cutting motion across his throat with his right hand. Sgt. Keller would always remember the look in his eyes. "There was no fear in him whatsoever."

As Spc. Seaman, crouching in the adjoining hatch, fed him ammunition belts, Sgt. Smith directed an expert and murderous fire with the long-barreled M2, hitting Iraqis who tried to enter the compound through the gate or over the wall. He tried also to suppress renewed fire coming from the Iraqis in the guard tower to his left.

Finally, one of his fellow sappers, First Sgt. Timothy Campbell, led a small fire team which stole up to the tower and killed all Iraqis inside. But by this time, Sgt. Smith's machine gun had fallen silent. The attack had been broken. Nearly 50 Iraqi dead lay all

over the area. Others were in retreat. But Sgt. Smith was now slumped in the turret hatch, blood soaking the front of his uniform.

Spc. Seaman jumped out of the vehicle in tears. "I told him we should just leave," he said. Pvt. Gary Evans drove the APC out of the compound at high speed to the nearby aid station.

But it was too late. When Medic Michelle Chavez tried to remove Sgt. Smith's helmet, she realized that it was holding his head together. A bullet – one of the last fired from the tower – had entered through Sgt. Smith's neck and traveled up into his brain, shattering his skull from the inside. There were 13 bullet holes peppered over his armored vest – the impact from any one of them enough to knock a man down. The vest's ceramic armor inserts, back and front had been cracked in numerous places.

"Sapper Seven," the wiry, hollow-cheeked guy who had been so hard on his men in training, so exacting, so insistent on "doing it right"; the guy who had led them into battle on the first day of the war with a rock-'n'-roll tape blaring from his Humvee; the guy who had personally got down on his knees in front of their convoy to patiently, carefully extract the deadly mines when they ran into a minefield near the Karbala Gap, was dead.

A chaplain and a sergeant in dress uniforms came to Birgit Smith's home near Fort Stewart, Ga., late on the night of April 4 to break the terrible news. Mrs. Smith, the German girl Paul had met and married during his tour of duty in Western Europe in 1992, listened numbly to her visitors. She fought the growing dread and pain by grasping at a desperate hope:

"Our name is so common," she said, tears welling up in her eyes. "Maybe it's a mistake."

There was no mistake. Paul Ray Smith had given his life protecting his men and his position. He had almost single-handedly blunted an overwhelming attack which might well have overrun the nearby aid station.

"There are two ways to come home, stepping off the plane and being carried off the plane," Sgt. Smith had written in an unsent email to his parents. "It doesn't matter how I come home, because I am prepared to give all that I am to insure that all my boys make it home." He had been the only American killed in the courtyard fight.

On April 4, 2005, exactly two years after his selfless action, his wife and their children David and Jessica stood in the White House as President Bush presented them the nation's highest decoration for bravery, the Medal of Honor.

It was the first awarded in the Iraq War. Paul Ray Smith had indelibly marked his "common name" on history's small bright roll of those forever remembered for their uncommon valor.

Present. Arms!
Order. Arms!

Sgt. Smith's CMH was the first awarded since Randy Shughart and Gary Gordon earned theirs. The story of how they earned the CMH and Sgt. Smith did have much in common besides the fact they all died. Basically, they gave their lives saving countless other lives and killed a lot of the enemy before they were killed. Sgt. Smith must have watched, 'To Hell and Back'. That hero didn't get killed, he just got shot in the ass, or something like that (leg). The US Army declared that there would never be another Audie Murphy. If you pull a man from combat when he can still fight, you might be doing him a great disservice.

*Call him drunken Ira Hayes
He won't answer anymore
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian
Nor the Marine that went to war*

The name of the movie was, *The Outsider* (1961) starring Tony Curtis as Ira Hamilton Hayes. The list of the Corporal's decorations and medals includes the Commendation Ribbon with "V" combat device, Presidential Unit Citation with one star (for Iwo Jima), Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four stars (for Vella Lavella, Bougainville, Consolidation of the Northern Solomons, and Iwo Jima), American Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

On 10Nov93, the US Marine Corps held a ceremony at the Iwo Jima Memorial commemorating the 218th anniversary of the Corps. Of Ira Hayes, USMC Commandant General Carl Mundy said:

"One of the pairs of hands that you see outstretched to raise our national flag on the battle-scarred crest of Mount Suribachi so many years ago, are those of a native American ... Ira Hayes ... a Marine not of the ethnic majority of our population.

"Were Ira Hayes here today ... I would tell him that although my words on another occasion have given the impression that I believe some Marines ... because of their color ... are not as capable as other Marines ... that those were not the thoughts of my mind ... and that they are not the thoughts of my heart.

"I would tell Ira Hayes that our Corps is what we are because we are of the people of America ... the people of the broad, strong, ethnic fabric that is our nation. And last, I would tell him that in the future, that fabric will broaden and strengthen in every category to make our Corps even stronger ... even of greater utility to our nation. That's a commitment of this commandant ... And that's a personal commitment of this Marine."

The correct name of the memorial is: The US Marine Corps War Memorial, not the Iwo Jima Memorial.

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There was zero traffic on I-40. People were probably afraid to drive through Holbrook, Winslow and Flagstaff. The radiation wasn't that bad, provided you didn't linger. We were still wearing the CD V-742 dosimeters and logging our radiation doses. Unless we went somewhere, like Flagstaff or downtown Winslow, where there was significant residual radiation, we didn't register much of anything. That particular dosimeter registers up to 200R. We generally recorded the readings and re-set the dosimeters when we reached 50R.

Here's one I haven't said in a while: Life's a bitch and then you die. I think it would be fair to capitalize the cuss word. There was a bright side; it was much quieter with no traffic. On the other hand, if anyone came calling, I was tied or outnumbered. Then, I got an idea. CB radios had provision for a PA function. I had a speaker around here somewhere. It took me a while sitting at the table west of Winslow, Arizona to wire it up, but Amy said she could hear it all the way to the highway and if I turned it, to the entrance of the ranch.

I had the bipods extend on both rifles and could move my chair to defend the entrance if necessary. If I did shoot at someone and miss, I could always claim it was a warning shot. I know that most agencies don't allow warning shots, but I was in charge here until they got back from ERK. The magazine with the incendiary ammo had a ring of red tape, the armor piercing black tape, the match ammo no tape and the Mk211 green tape. I wrote it down so I wouldn't forget.

All of this crap was supposed to go down when I was a young man, a not so lean, not so mean fighting machine. Back then, I might have hesitated before shooting. Not anymore, I started out irritable in the morning and it got worse though the day.

I had no idea how long it would take. First, they had to find a working wind turbine about the right size that still worked. Second, they had to locate the ancillary equipment and make sure it still worked. Third, they had to find something to allow them to remove the blades. And, fourth, they had to lower the tower and get everything onto the truck Damon planned to steal.

Then, when they got it back, we had to find enough ready-mix to put in a base, erect a shed to hold the equipment, string lines and put in a power distribution panel, extend the septic system and the water lines and move in the Navajo Warriors' mobile homes. You can see what I was doing with my free time sitting at the table, planning.

o

"You guys get lost?"

"We had to..."

"I figured that all out. Did you get one that works?"

"Yes, it was..."

If I had listened, I would have learned that they ended up in Tehachapi, where they found a wind turbine being installed. They removed the tower from the new concrete base and were out of there in a day. Tehachapi is on Highway 58 that goes to Mojave and then east to Barstow. They lingered at Barstow, checking the place out and identifying things we might need in the future. When they got to Navajo Depot, they stopped and did the same thing. The list they made was enough to give a survivalist fiction writer heart failure. Plus, they stopped and ripped off every pharmacy they passed.

The Tehachapi Wind Farm, with around 5,000 wind turbines, is the second largest collection of wind generators in the world (the largest is at the Altamont pass, near Livermore and the San Francisco Bay area), but is now the largest wind power array in the world in output. The turbines are operated by a dozen private companies, and collectively produce about 800 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, enough to meet the residential needs of 350,000 people every year. With over 15,000 turbines in the state (7,000 at Altamont and 3,000 at San Geronio Pass, near Palm Springs), wind power in California makes up about 1% of California's electricity.

The equipment was new, in the box, and had been stored in a galvanized metal building, except for the lattice tower which they took down and split into 4 pieces of about 40' each. Somewhere along the way, they had refilled the tanker so we weren't down much fuel.

I cleaned my weapons and put them up. I was tired and wanted to go to bed and sleep for a year. In our half civilian, quasi-military organization, Derek as a member of the Guard at the rank of E-6 was the highest ranking individual here. Gunny had been an E-5 and Damon and I, E-4s. Their information was far more current than mine so Derek was put in charge. Damon was an ET in the Navy and he would work on electronics and some electrical. Derek had been a tanker and more recently, an MP. Gunny was Marine infantry; he was in charge of tactics.

When they had the semi unloaded, some of them took off with that shopping list and others began to assemble the tower. Still others went looking for ready-mix while Gunny began to excavate a hole for the tower base. I'd say we had about a dozen of those 'cousins' from the Res. I had a sneaking feeling that they would reclaim my 24 acres. As long as they waited until Sharon and I died, that was fine with me. Somebody stole it from them; they were free to steal it back. Plus, I had a sneaking suspicion that once I was dead, I wouldn't really care.

I had plenty of reasons to stick around, though. Those next 14 years I planned on living were going to be tough. All we had now was what was here on the ranch plus what we could salvage. I don't suppose there is much difference between salvaging and scav-

enging. The dictionary defines scavenge as, 'to search through for salvageable material.' Salvage is 'something saved from destruction or waste and put to further use'. Good definitions because most of the country was a pile of junk. The next question becomes, why now, why not wait? You've met the early bird, right? He's the one sitting there chomping on the worm.

*Well, I'm a standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona
and such a fine sight to see:
it's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford
slowin' down to take a look at me.*

That was then, this is now. The corner is still there, somewhere under the rubble. The girl isn't anywhere to be found; and if she was, she'd probably have radiation sickness. Thirty odd years does make a difference.

"What's for supper?"

"Eat your beans if you want, I'm steak and a baked potato."

"Hey, I don't like beans all of the time either."

"You should have thought of that when you didn't buy the bigger freezer."

"Hey, who puts the food on the table?"

"I do."

"Well, who gets the food in the house in the first place?"

"I do."

"Well, who makes it possible to buy the food?"

"You do."

"Well?"

"Possession is 9 points of the law."

"Who was that guy I saw you talking to?"

"Fabio? He's an Indian who wants to be an Italian fashion model."

o

What tribe did Tonto belong to? (Potawatomi) How about Black Hawk? (Sauk) Tecumseh? (Shawnee) As of 2000, the largest tribes in the US by population were Cherokee, Navajo, Choctaw, Sioux (Lakota), Chippewa, Apache, Lumbee, Blackfeet, Iroquois, and Pueblo. Chuck Norris? (½ Cherokee) Charles Curtis, the 31st Vice President of the US under Hoover? (½ Caw)

I tried to look up Indian Lover once on the web. I expected to find a definition of 'one who favors or is partial to Native Americans'. What I found instead, was ads to date Native American singles. If you don't know that TOM is partial to Native Americans by now, what can I say? I can't say for sure when it started, maybe the time I transported the 'Chief' of the Meskuaki (Fox) tribe to a Boy Scout function. The Tama Reservation in Iowa is like no others. The Fox bought the land and own it free and clear. Fox are Algonquian.

We kept gaining workers because we were putting in electricity and had a well. For a while there, I began to believe they were turning our 24 acres into a trailer park. You can, however put a lot of homes on one acre of land, even spaced out a bit. They poured the concrete with some kind of accelerator in it and let it sit 30 days anyway. The tower was assembled and left on the ground while they worked on the turbine itself. Once they had that done, they went scavenging again and brought home pipe and wire and all manner of stuff.

Derek explained to me that if the septic system was buried deeply enough, the sand would filter the water and it could nourish the garden. I told him, I'd caught hell over one of my stories and it had to be deep, say 12' maybe more. For a while there, I thought they were putting in field drainage tile. Then, they started to construct an above ground tank, on stilts. Oh, a water tower. It wasn't but 15' off the ground so it was a good thing we didn't have any 2 story houses. They installed a 15,000-gallon shop built galvanized water tank on top of the platform. I heard someone say that they had requisitioned the tank.

By this time, you see, I was mostly just taking notes for my grand novel. I figure to tell our story and label it fantasy. Nobody would believe it anyway, so that was the best marketing ploy. I didn't consider the fact that every publisher in the nation was probably out of business. At least I didn't until Derek complained that he'd never published *Soul Forge*.

*Well, I'm sittin' on my 24 acres in Winslow, Arizona
Just watching the traffic not go by.*

*We planted an acre of Indians and they grew,
Slow down and take a look at me.*

You know what those Navajos eat? The same thing we do. Except they have a big Res and they can now go hunting any damn time they feel like it. I'm not particularly fond of venison so I asked, could they hunt me down a cow and a couple of pigs. All they need-

ed to do was go into Winslow and salvage me a band saw out of one of the grocery stores. A slicer, tenderizer and a hamburger grinder wouldn't hurt either. Then I could teach them the way Huey taught me to cut meat. And afterwards, I could show them how you were supposed to do it. Huey, cheated a little and we didn't cut the sub primal cuts at the correct bones.

Hell, I didn't even get to do that, one of them Navajo fellas was a meat cutter. He, of course, knew the correct way to cut meat. So, they rescued up some cattle and hogs and we had livestock. When I wasn't taking notes, I was busy watching I-40.

o

*Navajo Warriors sing the song of the vanishing race,
The Mighty Navajo,
The Mighty Navajo.*

*White Warriors sing the song of the vanishing race,
The White Man,
The White Man.*

"What do you call that building?"

"That's our livestock building."

"Do you mean the barn?"

"If you insist."

"Don't look like no barn I ever seen. Why did you tile the field?"

"That's the drainage system for the septic tanks."

"Well, good, everyone around here seems to be full of chit anyway. Are you planning on growing crops?"

"Nope, just gardens."

"Just what in the name of God do you intend to feed the livestock?"

"Do you have any idea just how many abandoned grain elevators there are, Dad?"

"No. But, tell me something, what are you going to do when that's all gone?"

"I don't know, Dad, we haven't even started to salvage the semi-trailers on the highways yet."

Derek had a point, there; we had passed many semis on our travels along I-40. And, we had only gone west. Now I remember; the 3 amigos had salvaged trailers from the highways in The Ark. Once they finish up with their little project here, perhaps I could persuade some of the kids to take a trip up *The Devil's Highway* and we'd see if we could find Ronald and Robert. They may very well be dead, but he did have that elephant gun... I was dying to tell him my big rifle was a .50 caliber.

Ron's doctor kept him very well supplied with samples. Unfortunately, he and I took a few of the same drugs and one in particular, Plavix, was expensive and his doctor couldn't get many samples. He couldn't sign up for Part D when it first came out because of his other insurance. That insurance only covered 50% of the cost of his Plavix and he wasn't about to share the samples he got. Robert had been on Plavix at one time and had given him 200 pills, lucky him. However both my amigo and his brother had very bad hearts and I didn't expect them to be alive, especially Robert. Back in '06 he had one foot in the grave. They had finally moved when Linda's father had died, but I had expected that. I just had to think about where and that came and went.

I remember him telling me that he had a one year supply of everything and some of it got so old he had to toss it. Man, would it be nice to have a problem like that. The doctor's nurse advised him when he needed to go through his stash and discard dated drugs. According to the map, there wasn't much around Cedar Hill, but it was in a fallout stream. If you have ulcers and can't take aspirin, there's always Ecotrin if you can't get Plavix.

It might be crazy driving the Devil's Highway after Armageddon, but it was mostly Indian country so I got Damon to drive the Hummer and a second Hummer and 6 Navajos to go along. We got there and went door to door looking for either Robert or Ronald Brown. Nobody answered their door and after a couple of hours we gave up. It was a very long drive for nothing and I never did find out which house was theirs. The round trip took 9 hours driving time and 2 hours looking around.

Of one thing I was certain, this couldn't last. This wasn't a movie and we weren't the only survivors out there. We knew about Show Low, but the next move was up to them. There simply aren't that many large cities in Arizona. Flagstaff at circa 50 thousand was a major city. Phoenix was the largest and there was Tucson. I think that Marty Robbins named most of them in his song, Ride Cowboy Ride.

This is one Urban Cowboy who misses the man. Thank God I've got a couple of his CD collections.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 13

*Ride, cowboy, ride
Don't ride too slow
Tucson's a mighty long way yet to go*

*He started his long ride in Prescott
The sun was a hundred or more
On down he rode at full gallop
Into the flat desert floor*

*Driving the big herd to Flagstaff
In Prescott the letter was there
Happiness soon would be sorrow
Sad news the letter did bear*

*Ride, cowboy, ride
Don't go too slow
Ride, cowboy, ride
You've a long way to go*

*Your darlin' now lies on her deathbed
Racked by fever and pain
Reaching for you at her bedside
At each breath she's callin' your name*

*Forward he leaned in the saddle
Pushing through mesquite and sage
His head never raised for a greeting
As he passed the Wickenburg stage*

*Ride, cowboy, ride
Don't ride too slow
Tucson's a mighty long way to go*

*In Phoenix he traded horses
Now on the back of this roan
He could see visions of Tucson
His darlin' and their lovely home*

*Ride, cowboy, ride
Don't ride too slow
There's still a hundred and twenty to go*

*In through the ranch gate he galloped
And without breaking his stride*

*He bounded out of the saddle
And rushed to his sweet darlin's side*

*Then as the dyin' girl saw him
A smile came over her face
Holding her hand as it tightened
Barely had he won the race*

*Ride, cowboy, ride
On through the blue
Ride, cowboy, ride
She'll be waiting for you
Ride, cowboy, ride
On through the blue
Ride, cowboy, ride
She'll be waiting for you*

o

It was a mighty short summer and I can't say I noted one day where temperatures rose to the 80s. Derek informed me one fine day that they were going to Show Low a second time. This time they'd pull up short and unload the Abrams. They were take the Stryker and the Hummers and intended to establish trade with those folk if there was any way possible.

"Count me out, I'll stay here and watch the highway."

"Lose your sense of adventure?"

"I'll be more good to you here than if I come along. I'll stand by the radio and can relay any message up to the Res."

"What good will that do?"

"Maybe I can put together a War party."

That pig wire and 3 strands of barbed wire they strung around the 24 acres barely kept the livestock in and I had serious doubt they would keep anyone out. Of course, I'd preferred castle like structures in my stories. You know high, thick walls that in reality took 5 years to construct and I somehow manage to erect nearly overnight. I had begun to suspect that leaving me home to keep an eye on the ladies was more keeping me out of the way than offering much protection for them. That's why I opted out before they could ask me just to stay home.

I had sunk into a morass of self-pity and blamed everyone but myself. If only this... if only that... Dear Vladimir, please don't nuke us, it isn't a good idea. It will force us into a life of crime and we'll end up stealing the place blind. Besides, beans give me gas.

Did you ever wonder what would become of our Navy after they released their missiles? 10 CSGs, 14 empty Ohio class subs with no missiles and tens of thousands of sailors with no port they could dock at? I didn't either, but it is an interesting question. *On The Beach* seemed to think there would be only one submarine left. Yeah right. They'd probably all ended up home porting in some country south of the equator.

If what Gunny and I discussed was correct, 50 million survivors in the US, where were they? And my major concern seemed to be finding more cigarettes. Usually, the only place you find full cases of cigarettes are in bonded warehouses. All the Costco stores I'd been in kept their cigarettes locked up in a wire cage. Why? Because of what a case of cigarettes was worth. 60 cartons at \$30 = \$1,800 and you could walk off with it, easily. That little wire cage probably held \$100,000 worth of the store's inventory.

o

"What did you work out with the people in Show Low?"

"Not one damned thing."

"They didn't want to cooperate?"

"They were dead."

"What do you mean dead, they get hit by illness or something?"

"Yeah, the .30 caliber flu."

"Then there are MZBs out there."

"Hey, wait a minute, why do you say bikers Dad?" Damon retorted. "Bikers are mostly good folks, and they don't go running around killing off towns."

"Well, EXCUSE ME. You know what I meant, bad guys."

"Whoever it was killed the males plus the children under the age of about 12. They took many of the females, there were far fewer bodies than a person might expect. They cleaned the town out lock, stock and barrel," Gunny explained.

"Surely you could tell who it was; they must have had losses too."

"Must have taken the bodies with them, Dad."

"That tears it, no more trips with all of the fighting men. Gunny, you're in charge of defense around here, you'd better figure out how we're going to protect our 24 acres."

"The problem is, it's not really defensible, Tom. Look at it, it's nothing more than 24 acres of flat sand with homes and wind turbines. Hell, you can't even drink the well water until it is processed."

Our well was ~410' deep and the water it produced was brackish at best. The water conditioner cost more than the well, bringing the total cost to 15 grand. The stuff would change the color of your teeth if it hadn't been thoroughly filtered. It was Rain Dance water processing equipment. The water actually stank, hydrogen sulfide, I suppose. Rain Dance was located in Ramona, CA near San Diego. We went there once, looking for a place to lock Amy up. If you took 78 east, you'd eventually end up in Julian, the Apple Capital. Julian is also unique among Southern California communities for its cold-winter climate, ideal for growing apples. All Julian apples are sold locally as apple pies, apple cider or whole fruit. In October, 10,000 apple pies a week are baked in Julian, when Southern California tourists flock here for the Fall colors, cool breezes and frontier atmosphere.

"I really don't care, Gunny, we have too much invested in this place now to pull up stakes and move. I'd suggest tank traps, but they don't stop people. Frankly, I don't care if you turn this place into a castle as long as we're relatively safe."

"That's about what it would take."

"Why couldn't you get a heavy duty concrete saw and cut up part of I-40? If you could take slabs of the road out intact, we could set them on edge. We could put in two rows of slabs and fill the middle with adobe sand. Well you're at it; you might just as well square off our little plot of land."

o

I was joking, but someone took me seriously. Do you remember the ad? The lot is 2640 x 970 x 2810; lot is 1,045,440ft²; approximately 24 acre(s). They squared it off alright at 2,800 feet on a side, a circumference of over 2 miles. An acre is 43,560ft². A square 2,800' per side is 7,840,000ft², ~180 acres.

This was a heavy duty interstate with slabs 325mm, ~13", thick. Can anyone tell me how much a slab of concrete 12'w x 15'l x 13"t weighs? That about 8 yards of concrete, I think, so I'd guess ~16 tons. Except, somebody figured out that if the slabs were 12'w, 234 slabs would be 2,808'. The outside wall would take 936 of those slabs minus 2 for gates. The inside wall would take less, only 928 minus 2 for the gates. Standing on edge with 5' in the ground and 10' above the ground. Did I say 5 years? That's about 1,826 days. 928 + 936 = 1,834.

That would assume they cut, moved and installed 1 slab a day for 7 days a week for 5 years. Wait, it gets better, if possible. If they left 12' between the two layers of slabs, They would need roughly 10'h x 12' wide x 12' between x 936 or ~50,000 cubic yards of sand to fill the space between the 2 walls and 4 more slabs to cap the ends were they put the gates. So, $936 \times 2 = 1,872$ slabs and mortar for the seams. I love math, it's so simple because there are only 10 digits, LOL.

They had to be sure to put the smooth sides out so nobody could climb the wall easily. I knew it couldn't be done. $1,872 \times 15' = 28,080' = 5.3$ miles of road. But, that was only 1 lane, so they divided by 4 and figured to pull up 1.33 miles of road. Never underestimate the creativity of desperate men. I have no doubt they found every truck mounted concrete saw in Arizona and a whole lot of those saws you walk behind. So, I'm sitting there counting again, 1 little, 2 little, 3 little Indians, 4 little, 5 little, 6 little Indians... Except, there were more than 10 and they weren't little Indian boys. And, they weren't lazy or drunk.

I strapped on my guns, mounted Salina and started the engine. I had it in mind to check out their work. Every place there was a crack in the Interstate, there was a red 'X' and that section wasn't going to be part of any slab. Back at the ranch, Gunny was running one trencher and one of his cousins a second. That trench was about 15" wide and 5' deep and they were moving along. I drove on into Winslow and found a 6-pack of warm beer. And then, I drove myself home and opened up a can of that Coors. Spoiled! There ain't nothing more skunky than a spoiled can of beer. I used the other 5 cans for target practice.

On the second day, they kept sawing, but others brought in a couple of cranes and they commenced to pick up those 16 ton slabs and move 'em. Stood 'em up on edge, got 'em squared up and tamped the soil back in place to keep 'em where they placed 'em. About 10' on the outside of the slab, they began to dig a trench with an end loader and fill the space between the slabs. I thought I'd seen everything, but you'd be amazed how fast this was going. By the end of the day, they had lifted, moved and set 9 slabs in place and had even mortared the seams. One of those slabs was the south end of the west gate. There had been some experimenting while they figured out how to lift the slabs and move them. Otherwise, I expect they may have move as many as 13 slabs.

"How many slabs a day, do you figure on moving?"

"Twelve."

"So it will take 1,872 divided by 12 or 156 days, 22 weeks, to build this place?"

"Nope, Sunday is the Lord's Day. We only work 6 day weeks, so that's 72 slabs a week. The 156 days may be right, but you'd better figure on 26 weeks."

"What about the gates?"

"Someone is making those even as we speak."

o

"I know I wrote a story about build a castle or something like it in Arizona. Can't remember with one, but it was probably set in Holbrook."

"Why there?"

"It's my second favorite place in Arizona."

"Where is your most favorite place?"

"Sedona."

"You probably couldn't have bought a lot in Sedona for \$20,000."

"I've always had a Champagne appetite and a beer budget. Once this place is all secure, how do you plan to get the tank in and out? I measured and it's 12' wide. According to the plans, you're going to put in 12' gates. It won't fit."

"Crap. We're going to have to make the gates wider."

"Another thing, with the walls 10' tall, how is the tank going to shoot over the walls?"

"Tanks."

"You're welcome."

"No. Tanks, as in more than one tank."

"But, we only have one tank."

"Derek has his eye on 3 more."

"Ft. Irwin?"

"Ft. Hood."

"III Corps Headquarters? Fat Chance."

"He seems to think they can do it."

"He'd better try Ft. Irwin first. The 1st Squadron of that OpFor unit also maintains M1A1 tanks. Ft. Irwin is one hell of a lot closer than Ft. Hood."

"He told me he wanted a tank Platoon and that consisted of 4 tanks. The cavalry troop is organized, equipped, and trained to protect and conserve the combat power of other combined arms forces. While its primary missions are reconnaissance and security, the cavalry troop may be called upon to execute attack, defend, and delay missions as part of squadron and regimental missions.

"The armored cavalry troop consists of a headquarters, two tank platoons, two scout platoons, and mortar and maintenance sections. The headquarters section is equipped with one main battle tank, one command post (CP) carrier, one APC, one cargo truck, and two utility trucks. The scout platoons consist of six M3 cavalry fighting vehicles (CFV). Equipment in the mortar and maintenance sections includes two 107-mm mortars mounted in self-propelled carriers, one APC, one heavy recovery vehicle, ERS."

"Does he intent to build an entire Troop?"

"Derek didn't say; all he talked about was one Platoon. However, I do suppose we could put together a Calvary Troop if we worked at it."

"Let's get these walls built first Gunny."

o

They got the road cut up much faster than they were able to move the slabs and install them. As a consequence, Derek, Mary and Damon when on an expedition with the HETS and returned with a second M1A1 and the empty space on the trailer filled with cannon shells and 7.62mm and .50 caliber belted ammo. They left and came back with a 3rd and subsequently a 4th tank. That made up one tank platoon. I figured they were done. When they came back with a 5th tank, I had to ask.

"Why do you need 5 tanks?"

"I don't, I need 9. I also need 10 more of the CFVs, and the rest of the vehicles to make up one Armored Calvary Troop."

"Are you out of your mind?"

"That's Damon."

"Maybe it runs in the family."

"As soon as Gunny finishes up the trenches, he's going to start putting in the munitions bunkers."

"Somebody pinch me and wake me up, this must be a nightmare."

That Twerp reached out and pinched me. Damn that hurt and I was still having the nightmare. Those stinking tanks are big, too, 12' wide, 92½" tall and about 32' long with the gun forward. It would take an acre just to hold his damned Troop. Once he had his tanks and CFVs, he needed one command post (CP) carrier, one APC, one cargo truck, and two utility trucks. Plus, the equipment in the mortar and maintenance sections which included two 107-mm mortars mounted in self-propelled carriers, one APC, one heavy recovery vehicle. I can tell you one thing; our part of WW IV wasn't going to be fought with clubs.

I also figured out that we were talking on the order of 130 plus people plus their wives and children. I sure hope he had that in mind when he built that septic field. I instantly did a Fleataxi and slapped myself on the head. That hurt too; it must explain his fiction – he does that a lot. A whole Armored Calvary Troop for what, some rattlesnakes? Ain't no damned Chinese left to invade and as far as I'm concerned the Mexicans can HAVE California.

o

If'n ya cain't beat 'em, join 'em. So, by the time they had the walls in and filled, Gunny had the bunkers done and Derek had his Calvary Troop. There were no smoking signs nearly everywhere. 'What a revoltin' development this is!"

Some kind soul brought me a real pair of cowboy boots. A thoughtful gesture, but I had trouble getting the half-height Laredo's on and they had a zipper. Another thoughtful person brought me a white hat. I put it up even though it was my size, only the good guys wear white hats and with all of the requisitioning we'd done lately I'd have felt out of place wearing a white hat.

They made the 2 gates 24' wide to accommodate the Calvary Troop. The road they cut up was from our exit east towards Winslow and there was a bridge down in Winslow anyway. With the bridge being just north of the airport between 252 east and 252 west mile markers, a person could get past downtown if they wanted to and it wasn't that far from where the crater from the bomb was located. There wasn't anything in Holbrook that was worth the risk and going to find Ronald was the last trip we intended to take to the east. Most of the things we need and/or wanted were to the west anyway.

I spent long hours listening to the ham radio trying to find some sign that we weren't alone. I meant the people in the area of Winslow and north on the two reservations when I said we. I can tell you right now that more than people survived. There were feral cats and dogs from Winslow and the occasional coyote. There were signals out there but they weren't very strong or my antenna wasn't as good as I thought. Neither did I pick up any signals on the SINGARS radios, but if I understood how they worked, you had to set the initial frequency. I'd have to re-read the FM on my computer when I had time.

Well, time is on my side, yes it is

Time is on my side, yes it is

I had nothing but time on my side, if you must know. When the shock finally wore off, during the summer of 2010, I started to get angry. I was angry at everyone and it wasn't my senility. The madder I got, the more I began to overcome the irritability and irrational anger. Our leaders had let us down. Not once since we came out of the shelter at the end of January the previous year did anyone try and contact us. Not once had there been a contrail in the sky indicating aircraft traffic.

BTW – *Time is on my side* is the theme song from *Fallen*. It's a song by The Rolling Stones.

◦

We had gone to California several times, unopposed. I was ready to head to northeastern Nevada and find my friend with the dogs. Unfortunately that would involve going through Holbrook and then north to Salt Lake City where we'd pick up I-80 and travel west almost to Elko. How many nuked out cities would we have to go through to find Fleataxi? CFI was in that area too, the last I knew. Wait a minute, I'm not going to Utah, Latter Day Saints have guns. Worse, they know how to use them. That's good for them but bad for anyone that worries them.

The Latter Days Saints were born survivalists. Not all of them practiced the storage of food and so forth that the Church Doctrine seemed to suggest, but a lot of them did. Some of them made a business out of survival and survival supplies. One time when I was in Salt Lake City, I took advantage of that fact and loaded up on over the counter medical supplies. Sharon laughed at the umbilical clips I brought home but they were still in my survival bag of medical supplies.

Disaster preparedness website; lots of free information for planning for all disasters, Earthquakes, Tornadoes, Hurricanes. Emergency Survival kits, tools, equipment, and supplies. Mention LDSResources.net and receive special promo code for 15% discount.

We should be prepared for the future. Only preparation, both spiritual and temporal, can dispel fear. Individual members and families should prepare to be as self-reliant as possible in times of personal or widespread emergency; and, Church leaders can help families learn to respond to emergencies by familiarizing them with information about emergency preparedness available through many sources. Church publications that help members prepare for emergencies include Essentials of Home...

Being a Methodist, I only knew what I heard about the Mormon Church. I hadn't heard anything bad and those Mormons I had to work with in the past were especially nice people. However, I went to school in the Air Force with one of those 'Reformed' Mormons from Tucson and I don't believe they were the same as the people in Utah.

First Aid Kit – Emergency Preparedness

Are you ready? Take the time to ensure that all members of your family know the following emergency preparedness procedures:

FIRST AID How to Make a First Aid Kit

1. When assembling your First Aid Kit, take into consideration the following:

- A. Specific health needs of family members.
- B. Include the necessary medications and equipment for them in your first aid kit.
- C. Items that your family is familiar with and knows how to use properly.

2. Discuss with your family doctor your special needs. He can inform you of the specific medications/prescriptions you need and explain how to use, store and rotate them.

3. The following is a list of BASIC MEDICAL SUPPLIES recommended for a first aid kit. Upgrade your first aid kit as you increase your training:

First Aid Manual

Sterile Adhesive Bandages

Sterile Gauze Pads

Hypoallergenic Adhesive Tape

Triangular Bandages

Roller Bandages - 2 & 3 inches

Scissors

Tweezers

Needle

Thermometer

Tongue Blades

Assorted Sizes of Safety Pins

Latex Gloves

Antiseptic Soap

Rubbing Alcohol

Cotton

Disposable Diapers

Insect Repellent

Moistened Towelettes

Antiseptic-Cream

Neosporin

Petroleum Jelly

Aspirin or Non-Aspirin Pain Reliever

Laxatives

Anti-Diarrhea Medication

Syrup of Ipecac – To induce vomiting if advised by Poison Control

Antacid

Sterile Adhesive Bandages in Assorted Sizes

Special Medications for Family

NOTE: The American Red Cross offers classes in First Aid and CPR that cost little or nothing.

That was just a sample of what you found when you used to look on the web to find information about the 'Mormon Doctrine on Preparedness'. Searching the web was easy; mostly it was how you chose to phrase your question.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 14

*Heavenly father watching us all
We take from each other and give nothing at all
Well it's a dog-gone shame
But never too late for change
So if your luck runs low
Just reach out and call his name, his name*

*[Chorus:]
Yah mo be there (up and over)
Yah mo be there (up and over)
Yah mo be there (up and over)
Yah mo be there (up and over)
Whenever you call*

*Never be lonely lost in the night
Just run from the darkness
Looking for the light
'cause it's a long hard road
That leads to a brighter day (hey)
Don't let your heart grow cold
Just reach out and call his name, his name*

*[Chorus]
You can count on it brother
'cause we're all just finding our way
Travelling through time
People got to keep pushing on
No matter how many dreams slip away
Yah mo be there*

*Well it's a dog-gone shame
But never too late for change
So when your luck runs low
Just reach out and call his name, his name*

"Tom, how did you get started writing survivalist fiction?"

"I think it was Desert Doc who mentioned moving to Colorado from the state of Jefferson. Whoever it was, it gave me an idea for a story. I didn't know anything about writing, so I built the story around me and my friends. The truth was, I didn't know much of anything, but I did know how to search the internet. When a thought popped into my head, I'd research it and include the information in my story. I had a friend who built Gatling

guns and I conceived Thumper, a 6 barreled Gatling gun that shot 12 gauge shotgun shells."

"Where was that story set?"

"California, Iowa, and Colorado. I had lived in each of those places for a time. I took what I knew and polished it by looking up what I didn't know. I wrote 40 plus stories, all told. Some were good and some weren't. I used the stories to educate myself and the other Squirrels."

"Squirrels?"

"Frugal Squirrel's. It was a website. Strange thing was the owner set up a second website called *Build an Ark*. I found that to be amusing. I didn't really mean to start anything."

"What were the stories about?"

"You name it, and I studied it and wrote about it. Towards the end, I favored writing stories about WW III. Gunny, morality has taken a fall; no, make that a plunge, since I was born. After WW II, this country was powerful and rich. We had the baby boomers and each succeeding generation was a little worse. The government had the bomb and really began exporting Democracy, whether the people wanted it or not. Then, Russia got the bomb and we came oh so close."

"The Cuban Missiles Crisis?"

"Yeah, we talked about that. After, we had the Vietnam War and more or less tarnished our image. We didn't really redeem it until 1991 in Desert Storm."

"The War on Terror didn't do our image any good, Tom."

"I know. We started off being disliked and ended up being hated. California wasn't a good place to live anymore and when Ron took off, we left too. Credit Amy for that, she made us so miserable we had to do something. Don't tell her I told you that. Derek was in Baghdad too and I was suffering terribly with my depression."

"Why?"

"The Iraqis and the insurgents were blowing everyone up. Derek was on a guard detail of some kind according to the Des Moines Register. He was sworn to secrecy and never has said. He was always in armor until then. Man, that boy loves tanks."

"He's not exactly a boy any more, Tom."

"He always will be to me; I know what you mean though. Say what do you intend to do to the top of the wall so we don't get shot leaning over to shoot the bad guys?"

"Know what a palisade is?"

"Nope."

"A palisade is a steel or wooden fence or wall of variable height, used as a defensive structure. I thought we could cut blocks out of the road and stack them on top of the outer wall. We could mortar them in place and they would at least stop rifle bullets. It's like an embattled parapet may be paneled, but are pierced, if not purely as stylistic device, for the discharge of defensive projectiles."

"Or, you could cut notches in the outer wall."

"We could, but I'd rather go up than down; besides, we already cut 4' slabs and only have to set them in place."

"How much fill did you put between the walls?"

"The total wall thickness including concrete is 12'. Total height will be 10½'."

"Ok, whatever. How much longer to finish up?"

"A couple of months, we'll do the front first."

"Will those gates stop a tank?"

"I doubt it. They're only made of 6" pipe 12" on center. They're strong, though and are 12' long. The way they're installed, they're quite solid from the outside and there are 3 layers on each gate."

"How thick is the plate?"

"All we could find was ¾" plate."

"So a grenade or a rocket would blow right through one?"

"One and maybe two; that's why we put in 3 gates at each of the entrances."

"So what the deal with the mound in the center of the ranch?"

The Command tank goes on top and the eight others on the lower level, all facing outward."

"I sure wouldn't want to be in that Command tank, only the front armor is strong."

"We could put in a blockhouse instead."

"I like that idea, check with Derek."

o

A couple more trips to Navajo Depot while they were finishing the parapets and Gunny and Derek declared Phase 1 complete. Phase 1? What the heck now? It was quickly reveal that Phase 2 was the stage where we began to grow our own food. For a moment or two I thought they were talking about some kind of military campaign. They already planted a small orchard to produce fruit like peaches, apples, pears and some citrus crops. They grew lemons and oranges in Phoenix, but could they do it here? I sure as hell wasn't milking any cows. I asked them what Phase 3 entailed.

"Phase 3? That is our truck salvage operation Dad."

"Really? Well put smokes and toilet paper at the top of your list."

"Where do you plan to store the stuff?"

"Leave it in the trailers; it's as good of place as any. Just don't go dragging back anything we can't use."

They also moved the antenna mast and antennas next to the blockhouse, adding an additional 10' to their overall height. This was getting better and better. I began to pick up a few more signals now. Was there iron in this ground? That had caused the communications problems at Arnhem during Operation Market Garden (*A Bridge Too Far*).

It wasn't getting crowded either, not with the additional 156 acres they'd added when they built the walls. Some of that land was devoted to pasture for the herd of horses they brought in from the Res. I stuck with my ATV; I had no intentions of ever getting on a horse again. I was 67 and I understand that senior had to be very careful about breaking bones. Sorry, I mentioned that before. Back when Sharon rode, she went around 140 pounds. When I mentioned riding to her she just laughed. If Clarence had been here, I just know we'd have resurrected the 10th Calvary.

They grew cattle in Arizona but most were range fed. If you saw the amount of grass on the range, you could understand when the cattle business in Arizona had suffered. It was primarily due to a lack of water – everywhere. Drought in the Midwest drove the prices of feed grains higher and large herds with little grass in Arizona lowered the price of beef due to there being more beef than grass. Now, the only cattle there were roamed free. The same with the hogs, what there were of those. Some had crossbred with wild pigs and we had very dangerous hogs.

Wild pigs in the United States are referred to by many names, largely because of their mixed ancestry. Wild pigs are not native to the United States and should not be confused with the collared peccary (javelina) of the Southwest. Swine were first introduced to the United States in 1539, when Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto brought them to Florida. After that, it was common practice for settlers to allow their domestic swine to roam freely. Many years later, sport hunters introduced true Eurasian wild boars into certain areas of the United States, and their bloodlines have become mixed with those of the wild pig.

The feral swine population that exists today is a combination of domestic, escaped, or neglected domestic swine, Eurasian wild boar, or feral pigs that have been captured for the purpose of starting wild, free-living populations. The intentional movement of trapped feral pigs has resulted in extensive crossbreeding of feral populations, producing variations in appearance. Wild pigs today are often hybrids: some look like wild boars, and others look more like the common domestic pig in body shape and color. It is often difficult to distinguish wild pigs from domestic swine based on appearance alone. If they had tusks, we killed them and if they didn't, we frequently captured them and tried to breed them. We didn't include me, I moved way too slow.

With a compound of 180 acres, larger than a quarter section of ground, if someone came in and tried to lay siege, they'd be out of luck unless they could get through the walls or gates, or we ran out of ammunition. From the number of trips to Barstow and Navajo Depot, it didn't seem likely that would happen.

After months of trying, I finally hooked up with ham east of Tucson. I thought I heard him say Tombstone, but wasn't sure. Been there, seen Boot Hill, OK Corral and couldn't think of any reason to go back. Maybe it would be different now, it wasn't a tourist trap. When I had been there, 20 years before, the number of gun stores was remarkable. Well, maybe, a genuine Colt might be fun. Every kid has a dream of what he wants to be when he/she grows up. I wanted to be a fur trapper. I learned how but it was difficult to make living out of it in the '70s. I became an accountant instead.

o

The ham wanted to know what to call me and I told him I preferred Tom. He could always look up my call sign (KD6GDQ) in the book, and learn my real name. I learned that he was originally from ERK and had moved first to New Mexico and later to Tombstone. I got that about the 3rd time he told me. He said he didn't have a call sign and I could call him Mac. I asked where he lived in California and he said Palmdale. I laughed and said so did I, damn small world isn't it? I asked him what kind of radio he had and he said it was a Kenwood TS-2000.

"That's what I have, how did you come to pick that model?"

"I had a friend who was a writer. He recommended the Kenwood."

"What was his name?"

"Gary."

"Hey, that's my name."

"Is this Tom as in Tired Old Man?"

"Yeah."

"Hey, asshole, how are you doing?"

"Ronald MacDonald?"

"The one and only."

"Hey, we went to Cedar Hill looking for you."

"You didn't find me because I wasn't there."

"Why not?"

"We were on vacation and down in Tombstone when TSHTF."

"Did you leave me any guns, asshole?"

"A couple. Where are you?"

"Winslow, Arizona."

"I drove by there several times, that's desolate country."

"How about we come down?"

"I'll meet you at the OK Corral, remember where it is?"

"Damn right I do. We'll come down state route 77. How about tomorrow afternoon?"

"What time?"

"3:00pm."

"What are you driving?"

"Either a Hummer or a Stryker."

"Been looting?"

"Strategic reallocation."

"You haven't changed."

"Well, from one asshole to another, neither have you."

"KD6GDQ clear."

"Bye."

o

Son-of-a-bitch. I'll bet he was in good shape without a doctor to keep his veins clear. If we could find Clarence... Ron's favorite handgun was a .41 magnum Ruger. He never went anywhere without the gun. There was a hat store in Tombstone too; maybe I could get a new straw hat. The map said we could avoid Holbrook and Phoenix, but Tucson was nearly mandatory. I hoped the radiation would be down. The shootout at the Ok Corral occurred around 3pm on Wednesday, October 26, 1881.

"Hey kid, whatcha doing?"

"I'm trying to figure out where to plant what."

"Put that on hold, we have to go to Tombstone tomorrow."

"Why?"

"I hooked up with a ham down there who turned out to be Ron Brown."

"As in the Ron Brown from Palmdale who you went to look for in New Mexico?"

"That's him. They were down there on vacation when TSHTF."

"We'd better take one tank, the Stryker and a couple of Hummers."

"Hey, all he has is a .41 magnum."

"Are we going through Tucson?"

"Yes."

"One tank, the Stryker and a couple of Hummers. How far is it?"

"About 350 miles."

"We'd better figure 8 hours travel time, what time did you tell him we'd be there?"

"We're meeting him at 3pm at the OK Corral."

"Then we're out of here by 7am."

"I'm going home and tape my hat to get all the lint off. If anyone wants a new hat, get their size."

The next morning, I got up in the middle of the night, 6am, showered and dressed up in my finest pair of jeans, buffed my boots, tucked in my shirt and strapped on my guns. I assumed they'd take their bazookas or whatever, but I was as close as I could come to looking like a cowboy. I grabbed my Winchester and the saddle bags that held 4 boxes of ammo.

"Ready to go?"

"What route?"

"77 out of Holbrook."

"Chit."

"You'd rather go to Phoenix?"

"Are those the choices?"

"Yep."

"Ok, we'll do it your way."

o

"You're an ugly looking sum bit."

"Screw you too, Gar-Bear. I thought you said a Hummer or Stryker, what's with the tank?"

"Derek brought me down. We have a nice place up in Winslow, wantta come?"

"Whatcha got?"

"180 acre Fort with 12' thick walls and triple gates."

"Indians?"

"Navajos."

"Just one tank?"

"Nine."

"Booze?"

"Derek has it locked up."

"Food?"

"Steak."

"I'm your man."

"Thought so. We'll stop in Show Low and get you a new home."

"Fine, now what?"

"I need a new hat."

"Are you still wearing that greasy, grimy old straw hat?"

"Not any more. I need 2 Colts, .45 caliber, 4¾" and 7½"."

"Is that all?"

"Whatcha got?"

"About 6 boxes full."

"Bring 'em. Got leather?"

"Everything has leather. You know where the hat store is?"

"About a half block down."

"You and that damned memory, don't you forget anything?"

"I'm having a good day, is all."

o

"You plan to drive back in the dark?"

"We have headlights, partner. Is your car dead?"

"Oh yeah, why else would we be here?"

"Who do you have with you?"

"Lyn, Brenda and the baby."

"Baby? She must be what, 4 years old?"

"You remember?"

"You never told me her name."

"Lynn."

"How are you doing on meds?"

"Just about out, do you have some?"

"Several pharmacies worth."

Derek said we'd stay over because he didn't want to drive in the dark and it would be too late to look for a new home for Ron and Linda in Show Low. It was fine with me because it gave me more time to shop. I wear a size 7½ hat and he didn't have many in that size in his shop. I tried them on and if Ron liked it, I kept it; otherwise I put it back in the box and the box in the back of the Hummer. He might change his mind. We cleaned Tombstone out of guns and ammo so somebody couldn't come along and later use them against us.

The next morning we left and headed back north. The only model left on display at the Fleetwood dealer's was an Entertainer floor plan A. It must have come in just before the war, it wasn't assembled. Ron said, that was easy, he'd take that one. It was 4-bedrooms and 2-baths; large, about 2,300ft². Damon worked on the two semis pulling the sections and got them started, somehow, probably a jumper and ether. I later found out that the liquid on the ground was the fuel out of the saddle tanks. They told me to take the Hummer and drive home, they be along with the home sections.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 15

*No more runnin' down the wrong road
Dancin' to a diff'rent drum
Can't you see what's goin' on
Deep inside your heart
Always searchin' for the real thing
Livin' like it's far away
Just leave all the madness in yesterday
You're holdin' the key
When you believe it*

*[Chorus:]
Shine sweet freedom
Shine your light on me
You are the magic
You're right where I wanna be
Oh sweet freedom carry me along
We'll keep the spirit alive on and on*

*We'll be dancin' in the moonlight
Smilin' with the risin' sun
Livin' like we've never done
Goin' all the way
Reachin' out to meet the changes
Touchin' every shining star
The light of tomorrow is right where we are
There's no turnin' back
From what I'm feeling*

[Chorus]

*Coz there'll be starlight all night
When we're close together
Share those feelings dancin' in your eyes
Tonight they're guiding us
Shinin' till the mornin' light*

"Do you know how to fire that Ma Deuce?"

"Show me."

"If this thing, the bolt latch release, is up, you're in single shot and if it's down, you're in full auto. It's ready to go, just press here to fire the thing."

"Maybe I'd better drive and you handle the machinegun, Gar."

"Sure, go for it. You do know the way, of course."

"Can't you give me directions?"

"Uh, I can't hear you, I've gotten deafer."

"CAN'T YOU GIVE ME DIRECTIONS?"

"I can hear you now, but what about while we're driving and I have my head out the hole there?"

"Ok, you drive."

"I thought so."

"How far is it?"

"90 miles. It will take me about 2 hours."

"2 hours! Can't you go faster than that?"

"Well, you see, I don't have a driver's license. And this is the first time I ever drove a Hummer."

"Jesus H. Christ!"

"Yeah, he goes to my church too. Sit down and shut up and we'll be there in 90 minutes."

"Asshole."

"You remembered. God, have I ever missed you. Nobody has called me by my name since '06. What happened to Robert?"

"Heart."

"His wife was Johnny?"

"Yeah, she went first."

"Sorry."

"He lived on borrowed time for 15 years."

"Is Sharon in Winslow?" Linda asked.

"Naw, dumped her for bimbo number one."

"You didn't!"

"Right, she'd have killed me if I tried that a second time."

"How did you get her to move?"

"Amy drove her crazy and I offered a Viking Mega Quilter. I scratched her back and then bought a million guns."

"You would."

"Hey Ron, my rifle is bigger than your rifle."

"I have a .458 Winchester."

"I bought a Tac-50."

"Hey, what about my guns in Cedar Hill?"

"We get you settled in and then you can drive and I'll man the machinegun."

"How did you come out on your house in Palmdale?"

"\$325,000."

"You're kidding."

"The neighbors put theirs on the market for \$400,000."

"Do you have a home like the one we're going to get?"

"Smaller, about 1,500ft². How did you get through the fallout?"

"Found a basement with some canned goods in it."

"Figures, you fall into a pail of crap and come out smelling like a rose."

"Have you seen your pal Tony lately?"

"Bite your tongue."

"I warned you."

"You did. But I still have the HP 9000 LaserJet."

"I suppose all of your money is tied up in that Trust in Iowa?"

"Haven't heard from them since the war."

"You should have been safe there in Winslow."

"Someone nuked the airport but missed. What there was of a town is gone. The good news is that the prison is gone too."

"Who are you paling around with these days?"

"Al Martinez. I call him Gunny. What ever happened to Clarence?"

"I have no idea. I stopped going to meetings and he never called anymore."

"In that case the 3rd Amigo is half Navajo and half Mexican."

"Is he a drunk too?"

"Nobody's perfect."

"Does that mean he is or isn't?"

"Isn't."

o

"How long do you have now, 11 years?"

"My new sobriety date is January 28, 2009, the day we came out of the shelter."

"Get drunk?"

"Had one drink."

"That's it?"

"Yep, Derek locked the booze up at my request."

"You're more honest than I would be over a single drink."

"I had a good teacher. I found a six pack of Coors and tried one. It smelled and tasted like, I don't know, skunk piss."

"Did you swallow?"

"Spit it out."

"Doesn't count."

"Good, I didn't count it."

"Do we get a basement?"

"No, you get median dividers. I don't know that there are any nuclear weapons left."

"Have you reached anyone besides me?"

"You were the first. What were you using for an antenna, a coat hanger?"

"A CB antenna. They're 11 meters so I only used the 10-meter channel and the antenna tuner."

"We're in Holbrook."

"What happened here, a nuke?"

"Took out the power plant. It's 33 miles to Winslow and another 5-6 miles to the ranch."

"You said Fort."

"You'll see."

"It that it?"

"That's the place."

"By God it IS a fort!"

"A Fort refers to a permanent Army location and a Camp to a temporary location."

"Have you named it?"

"Nope. The inside is about 178 acres and including the walls about 180."

"Where did you get the concrete?"

"You drove over it dozens of times Ron."

"You cut up the Interstate?"

"Might just as well, the bridge is down in Winslow."

"Shouldn't you have put the smooth sides out?"

"I told them, but nobody listens to me."

o

"What are all those trailers for?"

"Our Navajo cousins."

"Maybe you ought to call this place Fort Navajo."

"I'll ask Derek, he's in charge now. He was the highest ranking NCO from the vet's."

"But this is your place."

"Only 24 acres. They squared it up when they built the fort."

"8 tanks?"

"9, plus 1 Stryker, and a dozen M3 CFVs. The problem is we only have one HETS."

"What is a HETS?"

"Heavy Equipment Transporter System, the big tractor trailer rig carrying Derek's tank. The HETS is required to transport, deploy and evacuate 70-ton payloads, primarily M-1 tanks, on highways and unimproved roads and cross-country. The HETS consists of the M-1070 truck tractor and M-1000 semi-trailer. HETS has automatically steerable axles and load leveling hydraulic suspension. The tractor has front and rear axle steering with central tire inflation system and cab space for five crew members and the driver. They only had 1,667 M1070 tractors and 1,503 M1000 trailers."

"Where are they?"

"Probably spread out all over the country."

"So you'd need 8 more?"

"More than that. Those M-3s are tracked vehicles and you can only get two of them on a HETS. We'd need 15 altogether if we wanted to move out the entire Troop on a highway. In the desert, it wouldn't matter."

"Do you have plenty of spare parts?"

"I wasn't involved; I've been sitting here most of the time counting cars on the Interstate."

"The Interstate is closed."

"Right, I'm waiting to get to one. I counted slabs for a while, there, but I lost count."

"You need to get a life."

"I have a life, it's just boring. By the way, if you want to do laps, it's two miles around the palisade of the fort."

"Do you do laps?"

"Sure, they put in a ramp for my ATV."

"You have an ATV? What kind?"

"It's a Polaris I call Salina."

"You don't have a horse?"

"Salina only goes as fast as I let her. Let's go in and join the wives, I'm sure Sharon has coffee on."

"You have sweet and low?"

"Not the liquid, I thought you were dead."

"So, what happens next?"

"What do you mean?"

"Yellowstone, an earthquake, a tsunami, or maybe a tornado?"

"God, I hope not! We just had a global thermonuclear war! Hell, we've barely started scavenging."

"Mutant Zombie Bikers?"

"Shh, I'll tell 1340cc you said that."

"Who's that?"

"The biker babe I know in Texas. A 1340cc engine is a 2-cylinder, 4-cycle, 45° V type with 1340cc displacement."

"How do you know that?"

"I looked it up once."

"You don't have internet now, do you?"

"We don't have TV, radio, electricity, telephone, internet or anything else we don't steal."

"Strategic reallocation, Gar-Bear."

"That's what I said, *That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet.*"

"Where'd you get that?"

"Preparations, part III, look it up."

"I never finished The Ark."

"I know."

"Did I tell you?"

"No, you lied and said you read it."

"I said I was reading it."

"Did you finish?"

"No."

o

"They don't waste time, do they?"

"Your house?"

"Yeah. Another day or two and they have it assembled."

"Those medians provide good support and they'll strap it in a few places. That achieves the same effect as bolting the frame of a house to the slab. We get the water from a 6" well and the water is filtered as soon as it comes out of the ground, thanks to you. You were right; you can't drink the water around here. We have a 15,000 gallon water tank

and it gives us a little pressure. We have a large septic system with a 24 acre drain field. Right now it's pasture, but they'll plow that up for garden come spring."

"How are you on supplies?"

"The cousins brought their own down from the Res. We had 10 1-year supplies from Walton feed plus plenty of extras from the Costco in Prescott. Now let me fill you in some of the attractions of this place. Fleataxi suggested I used small inexpensive wind turbines and I put in 4 of those at 10w each. When there were just 3 houses, it was plenty of electricity. I have a propane fueled Kohler genset that was rated for 50kw and had 8,100 gallons of propane."

"They went to Tehachapi and brought back a big wind turbine. Then they hit Barstow, Ft. Irwin and Navajo Depot. As you can see, we've been busy. Do you want to go to Cedar Hill today?"

"We'll need a trailer."

"We have several. I get Gunny and Damon to go along with us to do the heavy lifting and provide fire support should we need it. We have a semi if you'd rather use that."

"You've seen how much we have, better take the semi."

"You're right; I get a couple of the cousins to give us a hand. Maybe we'd better set it up today and go tomorrow. Do you want a rifle?"

"I have a rifle."

"Not a cowboy gun, an M4/M203 or an M14 We have quite a few military .45s, too."

"I'll take the M14."

"Ok, I'll get you some ALICE gear. Do you want a .45?"

"I'll keep the .41 magnum."

"Ok. Say, where are your animals?"

"We boarded them in Durango. I assume they're ok, but the bill will be outrageous."

"I doubt that, they'll settle for the feed bill. We'll let Gunny handle the negotiations."

"I don't want any trouble."

"There won't be what would be a fair amount?"

"I've only got \$350."

"Sounds fair to me. Take the guy one of those Colts you brought back from Tombstone and some ammo. Can you spare a Winchester in the same caliber?"

"Yeah. You got any smokes?"

"What brand?"

"Camels, filter."

"Look in the well house and get some. That's the building over there with the galvanized roof."

While Ron got the smokes, I got the load bearing gear, a pair of canteens, the rifle and 9 magazines and 4 magazine pouches. I took those, 4 grenades, and 400 rounds of ammo. One nice feature of the M-14/M1A is that you can load the magazines by inserting a loaded magazine and inserting the stripper clips into the groove. I talked to Damon and Gunny and had them get the semi and a few extra people to load the furniture. I figured Ron and I would take the lead with a Hummer.

o

"Where did you get the money to do all of this?"

"Remember, we started with 24 acres. We cleared over 200 grand on the house. The land was only 20 grand. We managed to burn through it easy enough. When did you buy the .458?"

"It was Robert's. I got the whole nine yards and we can reload if you have the components. Robert had more guns than I did, I must have 50."

"Not counting the 6 boxes from Tombstone."

"Right."

"You can't grow enough grass to feed those horses. How do you do it?"

"They get grain from elevators and I have no idea where the baled hay comes from. They don't tell me much and I mind my own business. Mama is happy making quilts and I amuse myself looking for rattlesnakes."

"Kill many?"

"Saw one a couple of years ago. Didn't kill him, he had a rat in his mouth."

Fort Navajo – Chapter 16

*Maybe it's true what they say about it
Maybe we can't make the ends meet
Maybe we'll all have to do without it
Maybe this world's just incomplete*

*Still we all look for the truth in our lives
Searching from different sides
So hard living in a desperate world
But we all do the best that we can*

*[Chorus 1:]
Some people see a change
Some will remain the same
But all of them live their lives under the gun
Some see the road as clear
Some say the end is here
They say it's a hopeless fight, well I say I gotta try*

*Maybe there's too much to think about it
Maybe there ain't nothin' left to say
But if our time's really runnin' out
Then this is no time to run away*

*'cause we're destined to look for the truth in this life
Blinded by tearful eyes
If it's no use tryin' in a desperate world
Then tell me why was I born*

*[Chorus 2:]
Some people see a change
Some will remain the same
But all of them live their lives under the gun
Some see the road as clear
Some say the end is here
They say it's a hopeless fight, but I say I gotta try*

*Lonely-living too lonely
Is it too late
To turn it all around*

[Chorus 2]

Someone's tryin'

*Someone's cryin' out
While we live under the gun
Someone's livin'
Someone's givin' up*

"Did you have any trouble getting through Gallup?"

"Brought some cousins. No, no trouble."

"Robert didn't like Indians."

"You told me. They're people just like the rest of us. It just irks me that we didn't do right by them. We even paid the Japanese for being in the relocation camps, but I think the only land we ever bought from the Indians was Manhattan Island. I think things have come full circle, now the Native Americans will get most of their land back."

"I know several places you can get propane."

"That will help, but sooner or later, everything is going to wear out and where will we be then?"

"About 6' under, partner; don't worry about it, the kids will find a way to get by. There are more people out there than you might imagine. It's TEOCAWKI not TEOTW."

"How much propane can you get?"

"A few million gallons. You're going to have to come up with a transporter. We should be able to find gasoline by emptying out service station tanks and terminals."

"Right and we can get PRI-G and PRI-D from marinas."

"What about fuel for those tanks?"

"JP-8, there's a lot of that on military bases and forts."

"We're here."

o

Ron got the set to load the household goods into the trailer and Gunny, he and I headed to Durango to pick up Tango, Brita and Marta, the dogs, plus their cats. Tango is a pure blooded German Sheppard. The other two are Miniature Schnauzer's. Gunny settled the bill for a Winchester rifle, Colt revolver, leather and \$200 cash. On the way back to Cedar Hill, Gunny drove, I was the front passenger and Ron was in back with the dogs.

They were about half loaded when we got back. Damon was mostly supervising placing the load so it wouldn't shift. We were tired and it was late. However, they persisted and finished loading the truck. We talked it over and decided to return to Winslow rather than sleep on the floor. I did my insulin fix and broke out an MRE Entrée. As long as I didn't take the Xanax, I'd never get sleepy, the brain wouldn't shut off. After, I nibbled and before we got home, I'd eaten the entire MRE.

Say what you like about an MRE, if you're hungry, it's not that bad of a meal. There are enough calories in one MRE to sustain a person for 24 hours if he/she isn't working. You really can't expect them to put gourmet meals in a plastic bag. My only complaint is the short shelf life, 5 years under ideal conditions.

Despite all of the bad press, Halliburton's subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown and Root, lost a billion dollars during Iraqi Freedom. KBR was the contractor who ran the chow hall Derek ate in over there. His major complaint was that the dining room was usually closed when they came in from missions. Even if they followed a military schedule, it would have meant the chow hall was open 4 times a day. I blame many of the problems on the media, just because Dick Cheney was the former CEO of Halliburton, there had to be illicit profits attributed to KBR. Did they overcharge for fuel? They were transporting it through a war zone. Every coin has 2 sides.

We most definitely had to find another Polaris ATV so Ron could go riding with me. They found him one, a 2005 Sportsman Military Vehicle. That was a real ATV with: a liquid-cooled, twin-cylinder Polaris Liberty 700 engine, independent long-travel rear suspension, On-Demand All-Wheel Drive, electronically activated front and rear 2,500 lb. winches, heavy-duty flat racks, oversized D-rings, capacity: 450 lbs/204.1 kg., front and rear fuel tanks: 8.75 gallon total capacity, run Flat Goodyear Mud Runner tires, steel reinforced frame, racks and floorboards and dual tow hooks. They knew I'd get po'd and brought two back. I gave mine to the kids to play with.

The next thing on the agenda was locating and salvaging abandoned semi-tractor trailer rigs along the interstates. They went as far west as Needles and as far south on I-17 as Phoenix. Generally, they'd just lower the wheels on the trailer, tow the tractor out of the way and use one of the good tractors we had. When they got back, they'd bring the trailer into the compound and sort through the contents. Anything we couldn't use was collected into trailers that were set outside of the fort on the other side of the ditch. It served as yet another layer of protection.

By spring, they had finished going west and south. Their next goal was to turn the pasture and plant gardens. Someone came up with a bunch of used farm equipment and they used it to put in the garden. I suppose it ran maybe 6 acres, I didn't measure. It was about ¼ of the land that Sharon and I owned. They were taking the Stryker for protection on the trips, which continued through the summer of 2011. One day, they found a trailer load of smokes from RJ Reynolds. Their brands include: Camels, Kools, Winston, Salem, Doral, Pall Mall, Eclipse, Barclay, Lucky Strike, Belair, Misty, Tareyton, Capri, Monarch, Vantage, Carlton, More, Viceroy, GPC and Now.

It was nothing short of a lifetime supply, one of those once in a lifetime, million-dollar finds. They didn't get very far north on I-25 out of Albuquerque. In fact, they had a bit of trouble there and decided they wouldn't go back. They had finally found another, much larger, enclave of humanity. I think they were lucky they didn't get their butts shot off.

Many companies, it seems, had transported finished goods by rail to distribution centers and from there via semi. The Stryker turned out not to be bullet-proof or the people in Albuquerque had raided a few armories. I tried my best to keep myself informed on what they were finding on their travels, BUT, I was told I didn't have a need to know. Kiss my butt, this whole thing started out to be Sharon and my idea and now I didn't need to know?

"How are you doing today, partner?"

"You know what; I'm going to live forever, just to piss them off. You seem to be doing better, finally go on a low fat diet?"

"We ain't in Palmdale anymore Gar-Bear."

"I think the line was, *Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.*"

"Huh? Oh, *Wizard of Oz.*"

"You'd better guard the movie collection with your life, partner. That's about the extent of the entertainment we have here in this damned Fort. I'm bored. We ought to go on an elephant hunt or something."

"I thought they decided to call it Fort Navajo."

"They did, but to me, it's just a damned fort. The really strange thing is that I wrote about castles and forts in my stories. Now we have one and it's too constraining."

"We could take our ATVs and go hunt rattlesnakes. You knew you'd get old someday. You and I ignored our elders and now it's our turn."

"I'm serious, how about we get a Hummer, a fuel trailer and go see some country?"

"Gary, get real. With all of the bombs and warheads that dropped on this country, most of the roads are impassable. You have just about every boy toy you ever wanted and then some. I'm too old for this crap. If you want an adventure, learn to ride a horse."

o

"Gunny, can you find me a horse to ride that won't take off on a dead run just because I'm terrified?"

"Why would you want to ride a horse? We got you that fancy ATV to get around with."

"My pal Ronald sort of challenged me. Those horses are big and powerful and have always scared me. They seem to sense that and take advantage of me when I get on one."

"Why don't you take some of those anti-anxiety pills you have before you get on the horse? If you're all chilled out, you won't smell scared and once you get accustomed to riding, you won't be frightened."

"I'll go take the pills, you find the right horse."

I took 1.5mg of Xanax and because I've taken it so long, it didn't seem to be having much effect. I strapped on the Colts, got the Winchester and went to see what he'd found for me to ride. It was a pinto mare. I didn't bother to ask if it had a name, I was afraid he'd say, *Salina*. Gunny led the horse over to a mounting block and I eased myself into the saddle. He put my Winchester in the scabbard. He mounted up and we rode the inner perimeter of the fort. He asked me if I wanted to try a short trot. A trot is the gait of a horse or other four-footed animal, between a walk and a canter in speed, in which diagonal pairs of legs move forward together. A canter is a smooth gait, especially of a horse, that is slower than a gallop but faster than a trot. A gallop is the natural three-beat gait of a horse, faster than a canter, in which all four feet are off the ground at the same time during each stride. The trot was bumpy so he moved it up to a canter. I hung on and prayed. After a bit, he slowed down to the walk to cool the horses off.

"How are you doing?"

"My butt hurts, but I guess I'm ok."

"We'll do this again tomorrow and every day after that until you aren't frightened."

"You won't live THAT long."

"Sure I will. Eventually you get used to the horse and she will get used to you. And then, we can quit tranquilizing you and the horse."

"What kind of tranquilizer did you give the horse?"

"Telazol, an injection."

"Cut the dose tomorrow and I will too. I wouldn't want to take that much Xanax, very often; I might get hooked on the higher dose. I think I might just go take a nap."

"Does it make you sleepy?"

"Not really, but it really does turn my brain off. I can probably sleep the rest of the day."

"Ok, shall we say 8am tomorrow?"

"Shall we say 11am? It takes a long time to wear off."

The next day I didn't take any pills and I wasn't quite as frightened. This went on for about 2 weeks until I could actually ride, sort of. To be perfectly honest, I don't think I would ever be a good rider and not a little frightened. I just called the horse, *Horse*. At that time, it became Ronald MacDonald's turn to learn to ride. He was as timid as I had been in the beginning, but I think he lied. You never could really tell because he was a more accomplished liar than I was.

"Let's go, *Hoss*."

"I don't like being called that."

"I don't really care. You are going to ride every day for 2 weeks, just like I had to."

"Bull!"

"Bull, yourself. Every day for 2 weeks. After that we will be even. I'll ride with you, I need the practice."

"What's your horse's name?"

"*Horse*, and let's not start any Abbott and Costello routine either."

"What is my horse's name?"

"Ask Gunny, I didn't ask."

"Smartass."

"Kiss mine."

"I would, but it..."

"I know that one."

"You guys are..."

"Enough. Let's just ride and enjoy, if that is humanly possible."

Ron's horse's name was Thunder. The horse wasn't tranquilized and perhaps it should have been; Ron can really cuss when he gets upset. You may have some of those lyrics

when we had TV, in Verizon commercials, the singer was Michael McDonald. I happen to like music and movies. Maybe I'll find a red head.

o

My bottom end hurt so badly after 30 days in the saddle I could barely walk. What would I have done if I had to ride a horse all day, every day? Gunny said I'd get used to it – he was probably born on a horse.

"Are you done salvaging?"

"Hi, Dad. We are for now. Need something?"

"Do you have a pillow for that chair?"

"Hurt your back?"

"A little lower. Gunny talked me into learning to ride a horse after asshole challenged me. After two weeks, he said I just needed practice, and I made Ron learn to ride. Of Course, I had to ride with him for the practice. My butt hurts, my back hurts and my I don't know whatcha callit hurts."

"Do you have enough cigarettes?"

"I think I'll run out in the year 2075. Ron is in the same condition; he'll smoke the Camel filters until they're gone then switch to Winston's."

"Did you see anyone out there besides those folks in Albuquerque?"

"We didn't go into Phoenix, so there could be people there."

"What about Flagstaff?"

"The airport was south of I-40 and most of the town is on the north side. As nearly as I can tell, the strike was aimed at the airport, that's why I-40 is intact. They would have gotten a pretty heavy dose of radiation; I'd imagine the residents headed north."

"How did you manage to go south on I-17 if they hit the airport?"

"MOPPED up, went like a bat out of hell."

"But I-17 goes right by the airport."

"We had to use and on and off ramps where the overpass was down. It wasn't easy, but we did it. When we started to get close to Phoenix we started to run into trailers that had been stripped. We pulled back rather than engage them."

"What happened in Albuquerque?"

"We went into town as slick as you please and all the way north to Raton. We found those cigarettes northbound on I-25 about halfway between Santa Fe and Raton. Didn't find any trucks north of there and came back though Albuquerque with the 2 trucks we found. We made the I-40, I-25 intersection and went about a mile before they opened up on us."

"Good thing the Stryker had run flat tires."

"We're going to have to replace the Stryker. I'd like to find some LAV-25s to do that, they have a real gun."

"Where did they take them after Iraq?"

"I wish I knew. We didn't see any at Barstow."

"We didn't try Camp Pendleton. The Marines have around 400 of them and they have to be somewhere."

"We didn't check 29 Palms or Yuma, there could be some there."

"29 Palms is the Corps equivalent to Ft. Irwin, Yuma is a proving ground."

"Either way, I guess we're going to California."

o

"Drop yer ***** and grab your socks, we're going to Cal-I-Forn-I-A."

"Why?"

"To get replacement for the Stryker; LAV-25s. It a light armored vehicle that the Marines use. The advantages are that it's wheeled like a Stryker, amphibious, and uses the same 25mm cannon those M3 CFVs use/"

"Would my ATV fit inside?"

"I won't know until we can measure the inside of one of them."

"Count me in."

"No cowboy guns. Take a military .45."

"How long will we be gone?"

"Until we get back."

"You haven't change a bit."

"Sure I have."

"Yeah, yeah? Name just one way you've changed."

"I can ride horses now."

"Excluding that."

"I shave, get dressed every day, wear a new cowboy hat and my gun is bigger than yours. Tell Lyn a month or less."

"What are we eating?"

"Military ration trays."

"MREs?"

"No, these are group meals called Unitized Group Rations – A heat and serve, sort of like a TV dinner."

"Do you have anything that isn't military?"

"You."

"They wouldn't take me because I was blind in one eye."

"Have you taken it out and showed it to anyone lately?"

"I only did that when I was drinking. I'd bet them I could turn my back and still keep an eye on them"

o

Ron was right, we were too old for this stuff, but that didn't keep us from going. I think we were both bored out of our minds. We had obviously expected violence to follow the war – that why we spent months constructing a fort. In the past, few people even slowed down when they passed by Winslow, unless they need gas or were Eagles fans. I had been by Winslow dozens of times and never slowed down. I'd never stopped in Flagstaff either, not even to get gas. I always got gas in Holbrook – for the car, not from the food. For whatever reason we hadn't been attacked, perhaps the fort was too foreboding.

At that time we didn't know that the death toll in the US from WW III was closer to 90%. Many were killed immediately, others by radiation poisoning and still others by disease. There were others killed by marauding bands of people who would rather steal than try and grow it. We were doing both, but we were not, I repeat were not, stealing directly from anyone. The qualification for a Navajo family to move into the fort was simple; at least one member of the family had to be a military veteran.

It wasn't at all a surprise, therefore, that the place turned into a military camp. A couple of aircraft carrying CBUs would have wiped the whole place out in a single pass. We were basically a couple of platoons, ergo a company, and a Company is commanded by a Captain. As a result, Derek and Gunny received field promotions to LT, platoon leader. I probably don't need to explain who was in charge of each platoon. When we recovered the LAV-25s, we planned on creating a 3rd platoon. They were discussing who would become the Company commander. I had downloaded a few of the Marine Corps Field Manuals. I can report that when I printed them out, Gunny was most grateful. He told me that more than made up for the riding lessons.

We should have expected the high death toll and we hadn't. We should have expected the end of the world, for that matter. Most of the 20,000 plus nukes had been used. Did I tell you it got cold? The first clue should have been the inability to raise anyone on the ham radio. The second clue should have been the absence of any government or federal troops out helping people. The third clue should have been the absence of the media. This was the story of a lifetime! We were able to go where we wanted and do what we wanted with no interference, except for what happened in Albuquerque.

Then next thing you know, Clarence will show up and this will become another 3 amigos adventure. Not. We had to divide our weapons between China and later Russia. Together, China and Russia had more weapons than we had. Both countries sent most of their weapons our way, or so it would later prove. It defies human nature to live in a vacuum, even if it is nothing more than an information vacuum. If you want peace, you prepare for war, or restated, prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Gunny went through the Navajo vet's and found enough Marines familiar with a LAV-25 that we could at least get them home, assuming we found them. He told me that we were going to need to recruit more people. I told him to tell Derek, the two of them seemed to be running the show for now. We most definitely had to find a trained medical person, preferably a doctor. We had a hospital corpsman and an Army Medic but with Ron's heart in the shape it was, even a doctor might not be enough. As long as I had my meds, I kept the scale balanced. I had a shelf full of insulin in the refrigerator and while it said expired; the slip inside the box contradicted that. It must still be good, I kept having hypoglycemic events.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 17

*The greatest man I never knew
Lived just down the hall
And every day we said hello
But never touched at all
He was in his paper
I was in my room
How was I to know he thought I hung the moon*

*The greatest man I never knew
Came home late every night
He never had too much to say
Too much was on his mind
I never really knew him
And now it seems so sad
Everything he gave to us took all he had*

*Then the days turned into years
And the memories to black and white
He grew cold like an old winter wind
Blowing across my life*

*The greatest words I never heard
I guess I'll never hear
The man I thought could never die
S'been dead almost a year
He was good at business
But there was business left to do
He never said he loved me
Guess he thought I knew*

Reba has red hair. I have several of her CDs that I listen to when I have the chance.

o

The back of our Hummer had several cans of ammo for the Ma Deuce, rations, and our duffle bags. Ron was driving and I had the passenger seat and was supposed to man the machinegun if we needed it. The convoy consisted of several Hummers, mostly with M240s or M2HBs; only one had an Mk-19. We had a supply truck, a tanker and the HETS with one Abrams. Altogether, we numbered about 30. I think that Ron and I were there mostly to observe and because we had cabin fever. We stopped at Navajo Depot and topped off the vehicles and the tanker. The next stop was Barstow where they were going to look one more time for any LAV-25s. They were probably going to load up on any spare parts and 25mm ammo available.

BRAC 2005 had changed the functions of the 2 MCLBs. It was supposed to save money, eventually. The government is inclined to fix the military to death. They found some stuff in Barstow, but apparently not a lot. They didn't find any of the LAV-25s. Our next stop was to the south at 29 Palms. We found 4 of the LAV-s there and sent them packing for home with instructions as to where they could find fuel.

Camp Pendleton was now nearly totally surrounded by housing tracts. I believe the Marine Corps might have moved it, but they need the ocean for amphibious training. We didn't waste a lot of time there, either. Once they located the vehicles they were ready to head back to Fort Navajo.

"Hey, partner, how's about a detour?"

"Where do you want to go?"

"Palmdale."

"What are you, nuts?"

"Ron, I've robbed every gun store in the AV in my stories. It might be fun to actually do it."

"What do you expect to find?"

"Probably not a whole lot. High Desert Storm and the Santa Fe Gun Galleria were too close to Plant 42 to survive a strike against the plant. However, Jack First's old store in Lancaster was a class III dealer. I would just like to have a look around."

Whatever they dropped on Palmdale must have been big. I'd managed to talk Ron into going against his better judgment. Derek assigned the Hummer with the Mk-19 to accompany us. Several of the overpasses on I-14 were down and we had to take Sierra Highway to get to Lancaster. Palmdale was quite the scene and so many streets were closed we didn't dare to try and check out our old homes. We didn't see any people.

We made exactly one stop in Lancaster, the Gun Shop. It had been looted and there wasn't much there worth taking. I did manage to get 2 bandoleers that had been overlooked. They held 12 gauge shotgun shells, 50 each. Apparently someone had survived long enough to loot the shop. We decided to go up to Mojave and pick up highway 58 and hopefully rejoin the convoy near Barstow. Just west of Barstow I managed to reach Derek on the SINCGARS. They were moving slow and he suggested we wait for him. I told him we'd be at the outlet on the south side of town seeing if we could find anything worth stealing. We couldn't. I wanted to run up north of Barstow 8 miles to Peggy Sue's Diner, but Ron put his foot down, on top of mine.

The convoy pulled in shortly thereafter and we fueled up the vehicles and headed home. We should have told Linda 3 days, not 30. All of the destruction we had seen

gave me a creepy feeling. More than once I had the sensation we were being watched but never saw a single living soul. Bodies, yes, more mummified than rotted. It wasn't anything like I imagined it might be.

"Thank you for the detour, Ron. I should have listened to you, again. I wonder where all of the survivors have gone."

"Maybe down into the mountains between LA and Palmdale."

"I have the creeps. 'Derek, Dad, are you running a rear guard?'"

"About a mile back."

"May I suggest that you have them drop back about 5 miles?"

"Why?"

"I have the creeps."

"Rog. Tail elements drop back about 3-4 miles."

I didn't need to explain that one to Derek. We often joked about my crystal ball. I didn't have one, but I had, for a long time, kept myself abreast of the news. With no news anymore, I had to rely on my gut and for some reason the hair was standing up on the back of my neck. Perhaps I was just creeped out by what I'd seen. On the other hand...I expect Derek must have heard that in my voice or he wouldn't have moved the rear guard back.

o

Most of us have phobias. I don't like to climb and even in my later years was afraid of the dark. Even being back home inside of a fortress didn't change that. I had always operated under the assumption that you don't need to look for trouble. If you stay where you are long enough, trouble will find you. We had an advantage in being in Arizona; it was formerly an arid desert. These days, it wasn't nearly as arid because of the climate change occasioned by the war. Basically, Carl Sagan's 2-dimensional model was right.

The equipment we were able to secure provided us with a sense of well-being. The fort was large enough to accommodate far more people and grow more food. We didn't have to leave the fort very often hence the sense of cabin fever that some of us occasionally got. From that point on, most of the trips were hunting trips, looking for wild pigs and range cattle. The seldom used farm equipment should last forever; we only planted gardens and livestock feed for the horses and few cows we had come from salvaging. We were now into the early spring of 2012 and it was planting season.

Seed beds were prepared, plants bought out from the various homes and the garden started. My favorite veggie is green beans. Perhaps my second favorite is Mexicorn. The list of what I don't like is about 4 times longer than the list of what I do like. I also like frozen peas, lima beans occasionally and even sliced beets. I listed them in order of preference. Most of those are very mild in flavor, and things with strong flavors, broccoli, cauliflower, etc. weren't to my liking. I could probably live on round steak, boiled potatoes, green beans and gravy with jello for desert.

Because of all the people now residing inside the fort, Gunny had moved the range outside. Properly stored military ammo will keep for years; they were shooting ammo loaded for the M2 during WW II in Iraq, 60 years later. It wasn't crowded, but a ricochet would be dangerous, especially with concrete walls. Because Ron and I had the ATVs, we were made honorary Sergeants of the Guard. He had the 4pm to 8pm shift and I had the 8pm to midnight shift. We didn't have a very big guard force, only 8 people on duty at all times on the walls and 4 more on the ground. The wall guards were equipped with night vision or binoculars as befit their situation.

Derek became the Company commander and Gunny his adjutant. Contrary to standard military policy, Derek would command the tank platoon and Gunny the LAV-25 platoon. A fellow named Red Cloud was in charge of the M-3 CFVs recon platoon. His legal 'white' name was Joe Simmons. (Red Cloud was the name of a famous Lakota (Sioux) chief.) I can't pronounce his name in Navajo. In fact about the only Spanish I had mastered were my name and one profanity.

"When are we going hunting?"

"I don't like venison?"

"Cattle, dummy."

"I don't know, Ron, but we aren't going alone."

"Why not?"

"If we could find one and if we could kill it, we couldn't pick it up. They go around 1,000-1,200 pounds. We'd have to ask one of the cousins to guide us and you don't like Indians."

"All the Indians I ever saw were either drunk or lazy no-goods."

"That's because the respectable members of the tribes were at work. I see some humor in a drunk bad mouthing another drunk solely because he belongs to a different group."

o

While we had a full company, we didn't have one thing we really needed, artillery. If some bad guys did show up and they had 155mm artillery or even the smaller 105mm howitzers, they could blow the living crap out of the fort with our being totally unable to reply. The range of that 120mm gun on the tanks was about 4,000 meters with convention ammo and 8,000 meters with the newer shells. Conversely, the M109A6 Paladin is capable of firing up to four rounds per minute to ranges of 30 kilometers. Then I remembered that most of the National Guard units in the Phoenix area were armor units.

"We need to go to Phoenix."

"What's in Phoenix we need?"

"About 6 each of the M109A6 Paladins and 6 of the M992A1 FAASVs."

"Artillery?"

"You damned right. Someone with just one of those cannons could stand off 13 miles or so and kick the crap out of us."

"I don't know squat about artillery."

"Neither do I; I am of the opinion we'd better figure it out though."

"The next thing you're going to say is that we need MLRS units."

"I think that 3 of the M270A1 and 9 of the M970 would be enough, provided you had plenty of reloads."

I didn't realize it at the time but what I was proposing was essentially a mechanized Brigade minus the infantry and various supporting units. I made the suggestion and dropped it. In order to have a full mechanized Brigade, we would need the Arty plus M-2 IFVs and several support units. My son was reasonably well versed in the new Brigade structure the Army was adopting and realized that this would require planning, implementation, training and use up a whole lot of the space within our fort. However, he had time on his side.

The equipment would do little good if they didn't have the people to man it and the munitions the equipment required. Plus, we still lacked a doctor, dentist and nurses. I went back to my guard duty and never brought the subject up again. I began to notice more trailers being brought in, set up and hooked into the electrical, water and sewage systems. I assumed at first these were the people for the LAV-25s. When the number on new trailers went over 50, I started nosing around.

"Partner, have you heard anybody say anything about all those new families?"

"No, but they aren't all Navajo, in fact, they aren't all Indians. I noticed that they're building more bunkers too. I thought we had enough ammo already for the next war."

"What are they putting in the bunkers?"

"Big shells of some kind, maybe about 6". They aren't cartridges, either, the powder is in separate bags."

"He did listen."

"Who listened to what?"

"That sounds like 155mm artillery shells. I suggested to Derek that he add artillery and 3 MRLS launchers. You watch, every time they add a unit to this force, he'll get promoted one more step until he's a Brigadier and Gunny is a full Colonel."

"What will that make us?"

"Old farts."

"What is a Brigade?"

"A US Army administrative and tactical unit composed of a headquarters unit, at least one unit of infantry or armor or both, and designated support units. A brigade can be commanded by a brigadier general or by a colonel. The primary mission of the brigade is to deploy on short notice and destroy, capture, or repel enemy forces, using maneuver and shock effect. Armored and mechanized brigades are organized to fight successful engagements in conventional and various operations other than war (OOTW) activities. Brigades also conduct various OOTW activities, independently or as part of a joint or multinational headquarters in peacetime and conflict environments. They are subordinate commands of a division and corps and perform major tactical operations as part of a division or corps operation. Brigade combat teams will be restructured into Brigade Units of Action. Once transitioned, BUAs will enable greater capacity for rapid packaging and responsive and sustained employment to support combatant commanders. The transition to BUAs will also increase the brigade-equivalent forces available to meet both enduring and emerging mission requirements."

"Huh?"

"It's sort like a complete miniature Army."

"How miniature?"

"In our case, several hundred."

"It's going to get so cramped up in here you won't be able to fart without 6 people complaining."

"It isn't exactly what I had in mind, Ron, but it will greatly enhance security."

"Security from what Gar-Bear? I-40 is closed and we haven't seen hide or hair from anyone."

"I never completely shook that creepy feeling I got in California."

"You turned as white as a ghost."

"From the time we left Pendleton until we hit the Arizona state line at Needles, I couldn't shake it either."

"How much longer before they have this Brigade fully organized?"

"I'll ask Derek."

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Derek was now sporting the silver leaves of a Lt. Colonel and Gunny the gold leaves of a major. I didn't even bother to ask about that, but it did support my contention that they were putting together a Brigade.

"So Colonel, when do we get the Arty and the M-2s"

"We've located the Artillery in Phoenix and some Bradley IFVs at Navajo Depot. All we have to do is move in the vehicles, reloads for the MRLS launchers and expand our Infantry contingent."

"Ron said he thought the bunkers with the 155mm ammo were about full."

"They are. We found a couple of retired Marines who were previously with the artillery and they will be in charge of that. We have a motor pool set up and the Hummer Ron and you use is available for the two of you 24/7. We replaced the Ma Deuce with a M240, but you will have an escort anytime you leave the fort."

"What else is new?"

"We have scouts east of Flagstaff and near Holbrook. Both Al and I agree with your assessment that someone is watching us. We planted an extra-large garden this year in anticipation of having more people. We also secured and Damon installed a PA system that covers the entire fort. We'll use a claxon for General Quarters and a bell for All Clear. I need to use your printer to print the handouts of instructions."

"Use it any time; I have several cases of paper and some extra toner cartridges. Where are Ron and my posts?"

"We want you to go to your shelter."

"No fricking way boy."

"We're also constructing an underground shelter for the families of people in our unit."

"Did they teach you all this stuff in NCO school?"

"I wish. We have several higher ranking retired Sergeants. They run the military anyway. I want you to know one thing, we didn't promote ourselves, the troops elected us to the positions we now hold."

"When are they going to make you the General?"

"We already elected 2 Generals. Do you have any BDUs?"

"Nope."

"Both you and Ron need to draw some, General."

"No more cowboy guns, huh?"

"Why not, Patton wore them."

Sometimes I love that boy and other times I love that boy. It turns out they were short of those black sew on stars so Ron and I were Brigadiers. That was a real pain in the butt, every time someone saluted, we had to return the salute. They also had one hell of a time getting uniforms to fit us; most soldiers aren't short and fat or fatter. I carefully explained to Ron what I could remember about the rules pertaining to the military salute, which I simplified into salute back. I had never before worn a military helmet. In Air Force boot camp, we wore pith helmets most of the time.

They had some kind of new helmet, the ACH and Dragon Skin, which contrary to the reports in the paper has passed the Air Force tests with flying colors. While the Corps and the Army were using improved versions of Interceptor, our scavengers had located a supply of the now standard issue Air Force Dragon Skin. Ron wore his .41 magnum and I had my pair of Colts. The ranks were totally honorary, Derek and Gunny were really in charge and both Ron and I knew it. Derek would invite us to meetings and outline a plan. He'd follow that with, *Suggestions, Generals?* we in turn would reply something like, *Sounds good to me*, unless we saw one of the old Noncoms shaking his head. Then, one of us would ask, something like, *What do you think Sergeant Major?*

What would occur would usually be a discussion wherein the NCO would express any reservations he had based on his experience and any changes the plan required would be made or studied. Ron and I were careful not to offer any suggestions, we weren't about to bite our feet off at the knees. Ron knew about propane and I knew how to wire instrumentation to a rocket motor, the less we said the better. Hell, I hadn't written a check since 2003.

o

Finally, with the temperatures low and snow all the way down to our level, we got a call of the radio from the Holbrook scouts. The oncoming force was large, very large and the 3 men estimated anywhere for 600 to 1,500 people coming our way from the east. They stayed as long as they dared and headed to Winslow. Derek recalled the scouts from east of Flagstaff. The PA system was used to announce the pending action and the various units moved into position. Eight of the tanks were already in place surrounding the center hill created to allow them to see over the walls. The 6 artillery units were placed 3 on either side, facing I-40 but capable of being moved quickly. The M-3 CFVs were placed to cover the gates and pour fire through them if necessary.

The plan had been carefully worked out and the various units could cover all of the 4 sides. The infantry forces manned the walls and some of the Hummers were driven up the now widened ramp to permit use of the machineguns. As quickly as the scouts poured in, the gates were secured and they wouldn't be easily breached. The klaxon sounded for General Quarters, but I believe by that time everyone was at his/her post. Sons joined fathers, wives joined husbands and only the children and the older women were in the communal shelter. Ron and I so wanted to help but we were literally escorted to our shelter and forced to enter.

Up and down the parapet, commands were given to hold fire. The signal to open fire would come when the klaxon was silenced. Derek and Gunny were in the command center and when they got a report from an observer, they cut the klaxon. In the following moments, all hell broke loose. Firing over the tops of the discarded semi-trailers, a curtain of lead and steel struck the attackers. The proper term is fusillade. That meant one thing when you had musket loaders, but our people were armed with main battle rifles and assault rifles. Our people maintained fire discipline and only shot when they had a target.

The thousands of human hours expended in the months it took to construct Fort Navajo were fully recovered within a matter of minutes. This enemy didn't have tanks or artillery. The largest weapons we located were heavy machineguns, partially set up. We were at least, homeowners protecting their property and at most a militia. There weren't any survivors outside of the walls. Firing continued until someone thought to ring the bell over the PA system.

It wasn't glorious. The attackers were simply desperate people unable to cope for themselves. When they had exhausted the supplies in Albuquerque, they made a choice and

moved west on I-40. They came in school buses, city buses and anything they could get to run. Most were armed either with hunting rifles or weapons stolen from armories or Kirtland AFB. Most were emaciated and many appeared to be ill. We didn't escape unscathed. We had 20 some killed and over 100 wounded, the attackers had fired first and continue to fire at the parapet until they fell. Statistically, our initial fatalities were less than 0.2% and our wounded about 8%. Of those 100+ wounded 20 some died from their wounds because we still didn't have a doctor. By final count, our fatalities amounted to 0.45%. And, every one of those people had a name and loved ones.

In the aftermath, a mass grave was dug south of I-40 and the attackers interred in a common grave with but a single marker that bore the date: October 3, 2012.

Immediately following a convoy headed to Phoenix. It included all of our tanks and half of LAVs, including the LAV-25s, M-2s and M-3s and about half of our remaining troops. When they returned several days later, they had a semi filled with medical supplies and equipment, 2 doctors, a dentist, an optometrist and 8 nurses. I asked Derek how they managed to get the medical people to move. He muttered something about the Godfather.

Ron and I introduced ourselves to the people and asked what persuaded them to come to Winslow. They all told the same story; supplies were taken from a destroyed hospital and a couple of medical suppliers. They were offered a home, food and reasonable wages. They were all volunteers. They immediately pitched in and tended to our remaining wounded, preventing several more from dying.

"How do you intend to pay them?"

"We found some gold dealers in Phoenix. We decided to set an arbitrary value for silver at \$25 an ounce and gold at 50 times that (\$1,250). We're returning to Phoenix for more supplies; see you in about a week."

Before I could even a second question they were gone. This trip, they took all of the LAV-25s, a fuel trailer and 3 empty semis. When they returned, they had a total of 8 semis and one thing more, gold and silver, lots of it, giving us the basis for a basic economy.

What did we learn? The trailers were too high and needed to be tipped over on their sides; the design of the parapet need to be revised; and, we needed to get everyone's blood types and set up a database so we could draw blood for the wounded. Beyond that, we needed a better way to handling enemy bodies that created less exposure and less handling. On the day we saw four contrails in the sky in military formation, we concluded we need some kind of air defense, probably Stinger missiles. We also need the means to mill wheat and corn to produce larger volumes of flour and corn meals. And finally, we needed a clearer fire zone; we had to remove all the brush and shrubs for 1,000' around the entire fort. More than anything else, we needed air support, be it Ma-

rine Corps Cobras or Army Apaches, plus air crews, ground crews and a maintenance shop. We needed M982 Excalibur shells for the 155mm artillery.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 18

*I remember it all very well lookin' back
It was the summer I turned eighteen
We lived in a one room, rundown shack
On the outskirts of New Orleans
We didn't have money for food or rent
To say the least we were hard pressed
Then Mama spent every last penny we had
To buy me a dancin' dress*

*Mama washed and combed and curled my hair
And she painted my eyes and lips then I stepped into a satin'
dancin' dress that had a split on the side clean up to my hip
It was red velvet trim and it fit me good
Standin' back from the lookin' glass
There stood a woman where a half grown kid had stood*

*She said here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down
Here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down*

*Mama dabbled a little bit of perfume on my neck
And she kissed my cheek
Then I saw the tears wellin' up in her troubled eyes
When she started to speak
She looked at a pitiful shack
And then she looked at me and took a ragged breath
She said your Pa's run off and I'm real sick
And the baby's gonna starve to death*

*She handed me a heart shaped locket that said
"To thine own self be true"
And I shivered as I watched a roach crawl across
The toe of my high heeled shoe
It sounded like somebody else that was talkin'
Askin' Mama what do I do
She said be nice to the gentlemen Fancy
And they'll be nice to you
She said here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down
Here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down
Lord forgive me for what I do, but if you want out
Well it's up to you
Now don't let me down you better start movin' uptown*

*Well, that was the last time I saw my Ma
The night I left that rickety shack*

*The welfare people came and took the baby
Mama died and I ain't been back*

*But the wheels of fate had started to turn
And for me there was no way out
And it wasn't very long 'til I knew exactly
What my Mama'd been talkin' about*

*I knew what I had to do but I made myself this
solemn vow That I's gonna be a lady someday
Though I didn't know when or how
I couldn't see spending the rest of my life
With my head hung down in shame you know
I might have been born just plain white trash
But Fancy was my name*

*Here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down
Here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down*

*It wasn't long after that benevolent man
Took me off the street
And one week later I was pourin' his tea
In a five room hotel suite*

*I charmed a king, congressman
And an occasional aristocrat
Then I got me a Georgia mansion
In an elegant New York townhouse flat
And I ain't done bad*

*Now in this world there's a lot of self-righteous hypocrites
That would call me bad
And criticize Mama for turning me out
No matter how little we had*

*But though I ain't had to worry 'bout nothin'
For nigh on fifteen years
I can still hear the desperation in my poor
Mama's voice ringin' in my ear*

*She said, here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down
Here's your one chance Fancy don't let me down
Lord, forgive me for what I do
But if you want out well it's up to you
Now don't let me down
You Mama's gonna help you uptown*

I guess she did

o

A pair of portable classrooms was turned into a medical clinic and a hospital. Homes were located for our new medical staff as was furniture and clothing. They weren't real happy when they were dragged to the range and taught to use rifles and handguns. They claimed they'd never use them. Some crusty old Noncom told them to never say never. Our definition of non-combatant was someone too old or too small to pick up a weapon. For want of a better name, our troops became known as the Diné (Navajo) Militia.

The Stingers proved to be far easier to come by than combat aircraft. We ended up with 4 M1097 Avengers and a large number of the man-portable Singers. The missiles were FAF, IFF enabled. Damon was able to disengage the IFF feature. Without an aviation unit, our militia was primarily a defensive unit.

The winter of 2012-13 allowed the folks to make the necessary improvements to our defenses. They also erected a greenhouse out of wood and plastic sheeting to start garden plants in.

Question: If you have a dry moat, how do you get the vehicles in and out of the fort?

Answer: M60 AVLB. The Marines had more bridges than carriers. We borrowed a bridge and used half of it on each side of the fort. It was modified and is hinged, allowing it to be retracted (drawbridge).

Question: How are you old farts feeling?

Answer: Much better now that I'm above the rank of E-4, even if it is honorary. Ron hates saluting so we don't wear the BDUs very often.

Question: If you filled the space between the walls full of adobe sand, is a parapet adequate?

Answer: We only filled it up to the 6' level, giving everyone 4' of protection. The major flaw with the design was that we didn't allow for weapons mounts. At installation, the blocks they cemented on were 2ft square and 2' apart. They added machine gun mounts and permanently installed machineguns. Putting Hummers on the wall was a very bad idea.

Question: If you had gaps in the walls for the gates, how could Ron and you make laps around the fort?"

Answer: There were elevated bridges above the gates spanning the 24' between the front and back sections of the fort's walls. They had a weight limit of ~5,000 pounds and you didn't want to use them if the fort was under fire.

Question: Are Ron and you as ornery as you seem to be?

Answer: You've only seen our good sides. We're a couple of nasty SOBs. Brenda's boyfriend beat her up and Ron drove to Ft. Smith just to track him down and shoot him. I don't like to fight, but I do love guns. I consider your whole body to be the target, front, back and sides. I never take a knife to a gunfight although I might take a gun to a knife fight. Remember *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? The infamous scene in which Indy shoots a marauding and flamboyant swordsman was not in the original script. Harrison Ford was supposed to use his whip to get the swords out of his attacker's hands, but the food poisoning he and the rest of the crew had gotten made him too sick to perform the stunt. After several unsuccessful tries, someone made the off-handed remark, "Why doesn't he just shoot him and get it done and over with?" Steven Spielberg immediately took up the idea and the scene was successfully filmed.

Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.

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Ron seemed to think we'd won that battle on October 12, 2012. I didn't agree, we'd prevailed, but in a country with 90% of its population dead, everyone lost. They had collected the weapons and ammo, cleaned and stored them. We could easily run across a group that could use them.

What do I have in common with William Shatner? *I changed the conditions of the test. I got a commendation for original thinking. I don't like to lose. – Then you never faced that situation. Faced death. – I don't believe in the no-win scenario.* There are, however, situations where everyone loses, for example, WW III.

Movies are *fake* and documentaries are *real*. Right? Not exactly, both are heavily edited. Rarely have we seen the actual effects of a nuclear weapon. Yes, we saw Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but those were relatively small atom bombs, 15 – 20kT. A 5mT hydrogen bomb is ~250 times more powerful. Even if we allow for a geometrical increase as opposed to a linear increase, a 5mT weapon does a lot of damage. Our largest current nuclear weapon was the B-83 bomb, capable of 1.2mT. I'm not opposed to having them; I'm opposed to using them, especially in the wake of WW III.

You know about the M65 cannon, right? 280mm. This 47 ton gun (aka *Atomic Annie*) was transported by two tractors. The drivers of the vehicles communicated with each other by means of a built-in telephone system. It proved to be a highly mobile weapons system and adaptable to most road conditions. It fired a 550 pound projectile and had an approximate range of 20 miles. Six years after the development of strategic atomic

weapons, this road-transportable cannon gave a tactical atomic capability to US land forces.

Dwight David Eisenhower took the oath of office on Tuesday, January 20, 1953. It was the most elaborate inaugural pageant ever held. About 22,000 service men and women and 5,000 civilians were in the parade, which included 50 state and organization floats costing \$100,000. There were also 65 musical units, 350 horses, 3 elephants, an Alaskan dog team, and the 280-millimeter atomic cannon.

The first atomic cannon went into service in 1952, and was deactivated in 1963. Throughout the 1950s, the Army deployed nuclear cannons to Europe even though they were obsolete as soon as they arrived. Guarded by infantry platoons, these guns were hauled around the forests on trucks to keep the Soviets from guessing their location. Weighing 83 tons, the cannon could not be airlifted and took two tractors to move its road-bound bulk. It was a glamorous weapon to be sure, but it did not fit into the Pentomic structure of the Army, and it siphoned off precious funding that the Army desperately needed for modernization. Twenty were manufactured; eight appear to have survived the Cold War and are on public display today.

The projectiles were the W9 T-124 280mm AFAP with a yield of 15kT. The W9 was a very dirty warhead. The largest nuclear weapon we ever built was the B-41 (Mk-41) high yield strategic thermonuclear bomb at 25mT (dirty). It was carried by the B-52. Early production of the Mk-41 Mod 0 bomb began in September 1960; by June 1962, approximately 500 units had been manufactured. These weapons were retired between November 1963 and July 1976 as the more-versatile Mk-53 (9mT – 340 built) replaced them in the stockpile. They were assembled in Burlington, Iowa. The Mk-53 was the basis of the W-53 Titan II warhead. 65 W-53 were subsequently dismantled. We maintain the Mk-53s in our Strategic hedge stockpile. The Mk-53s were replaced by the B-61 Mod 11. I wondered why they kept the B-52s around.

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For all practical purposes Navajo Depot was our remote storage location. This was the year I would turn 70. I was using the wheelchair more and didn't walk too far, relying on the ATV most of the time. Ron was 2 years my senior and I'd give him maybe 3 more years, whereas I planned to live until I died.

They were patrolling constantly now, in hopes of finding people. We didn't care who they were, as long as they were friendly. If they had managed to live 3 years in a post-apocalyptic world they probably had some things we didn't and vice versa. For the most part, western literature and cinema on the apocalypse or in a post-apocalyptic setting tend to follow American mores, with the exception of British apocalyptic fiction. While American and Western apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction tend to emphasize the fantastic, with the possibility of world-ending meteor collisions, mutants, and jury-rigged vehicles roaming a desolate countryside, British fiction is more pessimistic in tone.

Post-apocalyptic literature was not as widespread in Communist countries as the government prohibited depictions of the nation's falling apart. However, some depictions of similar-themed science fiction did make it past government censors, such as Andrei Tarkovsky *Stalker*, made during Russia's Soviet era, which features the bombed-out landscape and survival-based motives of its characters and was inspired in part by the 1957 accident at the Mayak nuclear fuel reprocessing plant. Recently, Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril* was banned in the PRC because of its depiction of the collapse of the Chinese Communist party, but has been widely pirated and distributed in the country.

Due to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in its modern past, Japanese popular culture is rife with apocalyptic themes. Much of Japan's manga and anime is loaded with apocalyptic imagery.

The use of post-apocalyptic contexts in movies and the typical accompanying imagery, such as endless deserts or damaged cityscapes, clothing made of leather and animal skin, and marauding gangs of bandits, is now common and the subject of frequent parody.

The number of apocalyptic-themed B-movies in the 1980s and 1990s has been attributed to film producers on post-apocalyptic films working around their low production budgets by renting scrap yards, unused factories, and abandoned buildings, saving them the cost of constructing sets. As a result, many films that would have been rejected by major studios on the basis of script or concept ended up being made, while others stories were adapted to a post-apocalyptic setting following the success of the Mad Max series.

Some apocalyptic stories have been criticized as implausible or as scaremongering propaganda.

◦

Ok, fine, please explain all of the destruction that surrounds us. It didn't really matter if the UK, Europe and other places were or weren't hit, there was a million (billion?) tons of radioactive fallout in the air that circled the globe with the prevailing winds. If that weren't bad enough, Carl Sagan was right! Europe hadn't been out of the mini ice-age all that long to begin with, it ended during the 19th century. Winter had most definitely moved south.

I began to suspect the climate change was serious when we began to get snow in the fall of 2010. I didn't say anything because I didn't have anything to prove. Carl Sagan didn't care, he was dead. Most of our electronics worked because they had been sheltered or shielded. There was only one possible explanation for the lack of radio traffic, an atmospheric condition in the beginning and people dying after. It was then that we began to discuss the possibility that the death toll exceeded 100 million in earnest. Gunny had been the first to suggest 250 million dead.

I began to suspect his guess was low. When we found Ron and Linda, the two of us talked about it and Ron was more inclined to believe 100 million. With the passage of time, he began to adopt our view. We didn't know that the actual figure was ~270 million in the US alone. The population of the US had been ~30 million in 1860 and ~40 million in 1870, despite the Civil War. In 1860, we had about half as many states. None of that considered the fact that on October 12, 2012, the population took a significant decrease.

On TB2K, the story *Shatter* depicts a nation with a severely falling population due to war, disease and geological events. Anything is possible and probability doesn't mean squat when someone deals you a pat royal flush. Neither does it mean that your next hand won't be another pat royal flush, regardless of the odds. From my viewpoint, we're just stupid enough to actually use those weapons regardless of the consequences. Three Mile Island was a fluke until Chernobyl. Remember Napoleon, he fought several and lost 3 wars. The first was the Egyptian campaign, the second the invasion of Russian and the third ended with his final defeat at Waterloo.

o

Finding survivors wasn't *Mission Impossible*. Getting them to trust us enough to work with them was. This is where Ron and I came into the picture. A pair of 70-year-old *Generals* didn't appear to present much of a threat, despite their revolvers. They shouldn't have laughed; I could clear leather in ~ 1/2 second, if the tie down was loose. A typical conversation went like this:

"Who are you?"

"Generals Ott and Brown."

"Who are you with?"

"The 7th Calvary, also known as the Diné Militia."

"What do you want?"

"To be friends."

"Aren't the two of you a little over the hill?"

"Which hill? We're from near Winslow. Do you mean San Francisco Peaks?"

"Are you alone?"

"More or less."

"Which is it?"

"We only bought a platoon of tanks and 8 LAV-25s."

"Yeah right, you're probably looking for a handout."

"Want to see our tanks?"

"You don't have any tanks, what kind of a fool do you think I am?"

"Derek, our friend wants to see the tanks."

"Son-of-a-bitch!" Or something similar, generally followed when we showed off our boy toys. The tanks were buttoned up and we'd allow them a few free shots if they really wanted to know they were real. Then the LAV-25s would pull up and the free shots were over. Most of the time, when faced by 4 tanks and 8 LAVs, the folks offered to negotiate. The 120mm cannons were loaded with one round of canister, allowing for a further demonstration, if necessary. So far, it hadn't been. At the proper range, the canister round could pretty well destroy a house. It would look like the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, after.

Where did Ron and I fit in? Remember the John Wayne movie where he played Lt. (j.g.) 'Rusty' Ryan? Donna Reed was in that one. (*They Were Expendable* – 1945) On January 14, 1986, less than two weeks before her 65th birthday, she died of pancreatic cancer in Beverly Hills, California. Grover Asmus, her husband, created the Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts in her hometown of Denison (Iowa). The foundation helps others who desire a career in the arts. Donna never forgot her roots. She was still a farm girl at heart. "Forty pictures I was in and all I remember is, *What kind of bra will you be wearing today, honey?* That was always the area of big decision - from the neck to the navel." If you really must know: 34B-24-34 in 1955.

o

Most of the towns that had survivors were small towns, little dots on the map that most people overlooked. Larger cities, like Phoenix, Tucson and Flagstaff generally succumbed to infighting over the scant resources or illness. We didn't because we hadn't associated with anyone immediately after the war. Generally deaths associated with illness after an event like that are due to a lack of potable water and the cramped conditions the survivors find themselves in.

I've already told you more than I know on most subjects so don't be looking for a lot of links. Besides, with the internet down, you couldn't use them anyway, unless this story had been written, say in 2006. This is just to entertain me but I have no objections to sharing. Rule no. 1 is you can't have much of a story if you kill all of your characters off. Rule no. 2 is you can only tell the same story so many times. I looked and couldn't find any zombies; although some of the new folks sort of acted that way.

If you've convinced yourself that *Thou shall not steal* applies in a situation like this, good luck. You'd better have a lot of gold and silver and guns. Gold and silver to buy things, providing someone will sell them to you, and guns to keep your gold and silver. Always make sure to tell them it's your last coin and never tell them where you live.

Unlike the characters in my Trilogy set in Kearny County, Kansas, we weren't in favor of venturing out just to see what there was to see. If the Mexicans want the southwestern US, they can have it, it's mostly destroyed anyway. If those MS-13 gangsters survived, we have a present for them, but I'm dead certain they won't like it. If they want to come to Arizona and mess with our new friends, they should be aware that since we helped them a little, they're far better armed and most probably better nourished. They also have a SINGARS radio set to frequency 1500 and can call for help.

We finally had enough HETS to move all of our equipment and while the Diné Militia is a small Brigade, what we lack in size, we more than make up for in our rules of engagement, which are simple, shoot first and ask questions later. *Do not fire unless fired upon*, might make a great line in a movie, but we haven't signed any conventions. We even prefer hollow points and or soft points when we do reload. Plain old lead is good too, but it fouls the barrels. We will probably end up using wheel weights and I've heard bad things about them.

o

"All the bull waste about W/W alloy is mostly that. W/W alloys clean up very well and I have never found a batch of W/W alloy that really cast bad or give problems. Some batches more difficult than others.

"W/W alloy hardness will be all over the map depending how hot you run your mold and how rapidly you cool the alloy. It is all in consistency in your casting technique.

"I've seen W/W hardness from 11.5 or 12 air cooled to 31 bhn when water quenched correctly. Even cooling them in front of a fan will increase their hardness to sometimes 15 or 16 bhn. Casting in cold conditions with a fan blowing on them will get them up to 19 or 20 bhn. (Brinell Hardness Numbers: Aluminum 15, Copper 35.)

"Just remember consistency in casting will bring consistent hardness although most time no two bullets will test the same hardness. Even in the same batch they will be fluctuations but consistency will keep the fluctuations to a minimum.

"In other words get some W/W's and don't worry about petty things. There are more important things to worry about."

"The rule now is DON'T USE BATTERY PLATES. Apparently they have a lead/calcium mixture that cause very toxic vapor when melted."

If you want to duplicate those silicone or Teflon coated bullets that punch through level Ila vests, cast you bullets out of pure zinc. You may have trouble casting them, but if you can manage to get a bullet, it will go through the vest like a hot knife through butter. Never mind the fact that they're almost impossible to cast, experiment with different sized molds. Note to self: A JBT isn't a Jello-based treat, it's a Jack booted thug.

In time long gone by, when wars ended, we had parades. I think that changed in the 1960's when the parades were replaced by spit. You get drafted, you raise your right hand and repeat after him to protect and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. After that, you follow orders and you get lucky and don't get your butt shot off by some guy named Charlie. After 365 days in Hell, you come home to get – spit upon. There is a place for war protesters, shall we say 600 fathoms? Not even a submarine can stand that kind of pressure. I liked *First Blood* because John Rambo said what a lot of us were thinking.

I watched the other movies just to see the knives. I even bought the knockoffs. They great as long as you remember they are a knife and not a pry bar. I have been criticized for buying them because they weren't the real thing. Pictures of the real knives are at that website. I could never afford them and because both edges are sharpened and ERK outlaws them. You can own them but can't carry them.

Did you know that the Navajo and the Apache speak a similar language? The Navajo are closely related to the Apache, and the Navajo language along with other Apache languages make up the Southern Athabaskan language family. It sort of makes sense; the two largest Reservations in Arizona are the Navajo and Apache Reservations. I've searched but can't learn which parachute battalion Geronimo belonged to. Perhaps he belonged to the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 509th Infantry, stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana. They are the army's dedicated opposing forces (OPFOR). Also known as Geronimos, they hold the reputation as the army's most hated unit. The 509th is the oldest and most decorated paratroop battalion in the United States Army.

Or maybe I like Indians because of a song. Jørgen Ingmann recorded *Apache* in 1961, which charted at #4 in Canada and #2 in the US. In my mind, that ranks right up there with *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Bolero* in terms of the emotion it generates in me. I would hate to have to single out a single vocalist as number 1. If I did, it would have to be the man who Elvis Presley called "the greatest singer in the world" and Barry Gibb called the "Voice of God." Will Jennings (who wrote *My Heart Will Go On* – Titanic) said, called him a "poet, a songwriter, a vision," after working with him and co-writing *Wild Hearts*. Bob Dylan said, He sang his compositions in three or four octaves that made you want to drive your car over a cliff. He sang like a professional criminal. ... His voice could jar a corpse; always leave you muttering to yourself something like, *Man, I don't believe it*. His songs had songs within songs. [He] was deadly serious–no pollywog and no fledgling juvenile. There wasn't anything else on the radio like him. He was born April 23, 1936 in Vernon, Texas.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 19

*When Johnny comes marching home again,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout,
The ladies they will all turn out,
And we'll all be there,
When Johnny comes marching home.*

*When Johnny comes marching home again,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout,
The ladies they will all turn out,
And we'll all be there,
When Johnny comes marching home.*

*With drums and guns and guns and drums, hurroo, hurroo
With drums and guns and guns and drums, hurroo, hurroo
With drums and guns and guns and drums
The enemy nearly slew ye,
Darling John, it's been so long,
Johnny I hardly knew ye.*

*Tis glad I am to see ye home, hurroo, hurroo
Tis glad I am to see ye home, hurroo, hurroo
Tis glad I am to see ye home
My darling John, so pale and worn
So low in check, so high in bone
Oh Johnny I hardly knew ye.*

*When Johnny comes marching home again,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout,
The ladies they will all turn out,
And we'll all be there,
When Johnny comes marching home.*

*Where are your eyes that were so mild, hurroo, hurroo
Where are your eyes that were so mild, hurroo, hurroo
Where are your eyes that were so mild*

*When my poor heart you first beguiled
Why did ye run from me and the child
Oh Johnny, I hardly knew ye.*

*When Johnny comes marching home again,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout,
The ladies they will all turn out,
And we'll all be there,
When Johnny comes marching home.*

*Where are your legs that used to run, hurroo, hurroo
Where are your legs that used to run, hurroo, hurroo
Where are your legs that used to run
When first you went to carry a gun
Indeed your dancing days are done
Oh Johnny, I hardly knew ye.*

*Ye haven't an arm, and ye haven't a leg, hurroo, hurroo
Ye haven't an arm, and ye haven't a leg, hurroo, hurroo
Ye haven't an arm, and ye haven't a leg
Ye're an eyeless, boneless, chickenless egg
And Ye'll have to put with a bowl to beg
Oh Johnny I hardly knew ye.*

*When Johnny comes marching home again,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then,
Hurrah! Hurrah!
The men will cheer, the boys will shout,
The ladies they will all turn out,
And we'll all be there,
When Johnny comes marching home*

That song was recorded by the Chad Mitchell Trio. It is based on the Irish traditional anti-war and anti-recruiting song. The original had the same melody as 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home'.

I said:

Derek,

Every day I read about more people getting killed in Iraq. This situation over there appears to be going downhill. I'm sorry, but I can't help worrying about all of our troops over there.

Talk is that we will be out of there by 12-31-07. ABC had footage of IEDs exploding and they give just the briefest idea of what it must be like over there.

There is a town named Hell in Michigan and they are getting ready to celebrate 6-6-06.

Any progress on getting your story published?

I haven't written earlier because it is getting very difficult to put together anything that makes much sense.

Love,

Dad

He replied:

Al-Zarqawi is dead, so you can sleep a little better at night, Dad. ABC has no clue: they just put together what they wanted you to see. I don't even watch anything but FOX News anymore.

Hell is celebrating 666? Who knew?

Currently up to Chapter 10 in the rewrites. Will send some chapters for you to peruse soon.

Why are you having problems with coherent thoughts, Dad? Honestly, you worry about me? I just gotta keep talking to God, and I'll be OK; you must have a dedicated T3 connection to Him.

o

Do I want to leave ERK? Does a man dying of thirst want a drink of water?

Depending where you look for information, Arizona has 15 counties and 108 communities. I used that list because it was the longest. With that in mind, our job wasn't as hard as it may have sounded when I told you we were checking the small towns. One of the towns was a ghost town, a second was unincorporated and a third was a census designated area. Now, if we were in a state like Iowa, we'd be dealing with 99 counties and 999 communities. The 2000 census gave the population as 5,130,632 and it was estimated at 5,939,292 in 2005. The Phoenix metropolitan area accounted for 3.9 million of the population and Tucson another million. Flagstaff came in around 50 thousand. If my math is right, that means that the other million were spread out all over the state.

Twenty-three tribes call Arizona home. According to 2003 US Census estimates, Arizona has the second highest number (and the 6th highest percentage) of Native Americans of any state in the Union. 286,680 reportedly live in Arizona, representing more than 10% of the country's total Indian population of 2,752,158. Only California has more Indians than Arizona, and Arizona has slightly more Indians than Oklahoma. As of 2000, 74.1% of Arizona residents age 5 and older speak English at home and 19.5% speak Spanish. Navajo is the third most spoken language at 1.9%, followed by other Native North American languages at 0.6% and German at 0.5%. The largest ancestry group was Mexican.

Figured you need some perspective on what we were trying to do. You couldn't assume that all of the Indians lived on the reservations. The 2000 census reported 298,215 Navajos living throughout the United States, of which 173,987 were living within the Navajo Nation boundaries. 131,166 lived in Arizona. 17,512 of these lived in Maricopa County, which includes the city of Phoenix. Therefore, according to the 2000 census $131,166 \div 283,680 = 46\%$ of the Indians were Navajo. Can Sharon pick 'em or not?

◦

Here a little more perspective:

About 2,000 inmates living in a barbed-wire-surrounded tent encampment at the Maricopa County Jail have been given permission to strip down to their government-issued pink boxer shorts.

On Wednesday, hundreds of men wearing boxers were either curled up on their bunk beds or chatted in the tents, which reached 138 degrees inside the week before. Many were also swathed in wet, pink towels as sweat collected on their chests and dripped down to their pink socks.

"It feels like we are in a furnace," said James Zanzo't, an inmate who has lived in the tents for 1½ years. "It's inhumane."

Joe Arpaio, the tough-guy sheriff who created the tent city and long ago started making his prisoners wear pink, and eat bologna sandwiches, is not one bit sympathetic.

He said Wednesday that he told all of the inmates: "It's 120° in Iraq and our soldiers are living in tents too, and they didn't commit any crimes, so shut your damned mouths."

According to Derek, the temperatures in Iraq reached 120° at 10am and into the high 130s by midafternoon.

◦

Do you still want to criticize me about liking Sheriffs? I think perhaps the only state with more liberal gun laws than Arizona is Alaska. It didn't really matter; we had a copy of the Constitution with the first 10 Amendments. The Diné Militia, being necessary to the security of a free Arizona, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed. Kind of has a ring to it, doesn't it? If we weren't well regulated nobody was and the last time I looked, Arizona was the 48th state.

We started to add bows and arrows to our weapons collection, who knew when this would end and we might become a nation again. We also planned to stop in Ventura the next time we went to ERK and load up on spears, tomahawks and knives at Cold Steel. I figured I was destined to never own the knife I really wanted, the Randall Model 2 "Fighting Stiletto" with a 8" blade. I once had the opportunity to hold one, I'm sure that was a close as I'd ever come. Effective 3-1-06, Randall limited orders to one knife per household per quarter. Their backlog of orders was over 4 years and they were taking orders for delivery in 2011.

Randall has a select dealer network consisting of some 50 dealers. If you can find one and he has what you want, buy it. Otherwise, you can order it and put down a \$50 deposit which will lock in the price of the knife, but not speed delivery. It's only my opinion, but I think they're some of the best knives made.

"Where are we going next?"

"Prescott."

"Suits me, they have 2 Costco stores."

"Which have, by this time, probably been picked clean."

"All I want is a case of Bic lighters."

"What no beans and rice?"

"Don't knock it, most of the people of the world live on rice; and beans are full of protein and methane."

"All they carried was pinto beans."

"I know, isn't it great, Sharon hates them."

o

There was another reason Prescott was famous. It was the site of merchant Sam Hill's hardware store, famous for its extensive stock in its downtown location and out of town warehouse, and made memorable by the question that became part of the US vernacular: "Where in the Sam Hill did you get that?" Now you know too.

"We'd work one direction for a while, regroup and try a different direction. Old Ron and I were getting' pretty good at being targets. I can't tell you how many times he said, "Here's comes the good part, we get to show off the tanks." It would be just our luck that while the Diné Militia was off saving Arizona those ERKs that gave me the creepy feeling would show up and attack either us or the fort. Doc said when my ulcers got to bothering me take 2 Prevacid a day. (Try getting sub Part D to pay for that!)

We couldn't move all the people we found to the fort, it was only about 180 acres. We did, however, give them weapons and ammo if they need them and some of the beans and rice to tide them over. This was Arizona and most of the people in the rural part of the state didn't need any firearms. I learned something new in Prescott.

Prescott is home to the historical area known as "Whiskey Row", up until 1956 a notorious red-light district. Whiskey Row runs north and south on N. Montezuma between Gurley and E. Goodwin St., directly west of the county courthouse. The row has been the home of the St. Michael's Hotel and the Palace Hotel since the late 1800's along with more colorful purveyors of night-life. This block was also the site of merchant Sam Hill's hardware store, famous for its extensive stock in its downtown location and out of town warehouse, and made memorable by the question that became part of the US vernacular: "Where in the Sam Hill did you get that?"

Brigham Young sent Mormons to Arizona in the mid-to-late 19th century. They founded Mesa, Snowflake, Heber, Safford and other towns. They also settled in the Phoenix Valley (or "Valley of the Sun"), Tempe and Prescott, among other areas.

A party was constantly on the road trying to locate people. We used the same system the US Navy used on their subs, Gold and Blue crews, and a useful adaptation that reduced the wear and tear on the equipment. Ron and I had finally retired, hopefully for the last time. He was getting more frequent chest pains and my feet hurt so badly by now I could barely walk.

o

His bypass dated back to April of '92. His doctor had declined to perform a second one and it was now ~21 years old. One of these nights, he was going to go to bed and not wake up in the morning. I almost think I would have traded places with him because when your feet hurt, you hurt all over. There are some kinds of pain that there is no treatment for, most especially these days.

"You look like crap."

"That's the pot calling the kettle black, Gar-Bear."

"I know, I looked into the mirror and didn't recognize myself."

"The bad part is that I feel worse than I look."

"Did you talk to the Doc?"

"He just said what I've been hearing all of my life, live life one day at a time."

"Derek says that they've contacted about 90 communities and all of the tribes. He also said that they thought they'd go north and try Utah next."

"Salt Lake will probably be wiped out."

"I agree, but there aren't many likely targets in the southern half of the state."

"Do Gunny and he consider Arizona complete?"

"With the communities we contacted and helped however we could, they can carry on in their local areas."

"We didn't really do all that much."

"We didn't have much to give, Ron. Everyone got a little food, a little seed and a few weapons. I heard that some of them had enough people to start their own militias. I also understand that they ran off copies of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. That is the basic law of the land and they can adjust it as needed to suit their particular circumstance."

"I'll be honest; I never thought this would happen."

"Probably 80% of our population never thought it would happen. That isn't the same as could happen. As far back as Eisenhower, the country began preparing for the possibility. That's what the basis for the interstate highway plan, transportation in the case of war. Maybe MacArthur and LeMay were right. Maybe we should have wiped out the Chinese when we could. During the Korean War, there weren't many nations with the bomb. The Russians only had a few and they didn't test an H-bomb until 1955. You know, as a kid, the prospect of a nuclear war almost kept me up nights."

"It all about politics and the military, pal. I remember them talking about the military industrial complex. Then, it was the Arms Race. Later it became Defense Contractors. Hell, they make defense systems so complicated and expensive, we can't afford them. How many B-2 bombers did they build? How many F-22 Raptors did we end up with?"

"It's the Pygmalion effect, a self-fulfilling prophecy. The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the original false conception come true. If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

"Did you learn that in school?"

"Yeah, the school of hard knocks. There are so many examples. Take for instance the politician who opens his mouth and makes a statement that results in a change of his attitude. We claimed to be the most powerful nation on the earth for so long, we finally believed it. And, I believe, that led us to be willing to use our power to accomplish political agendas."

"You have a 50-50 chance, you know."

"Of what?"

"Of being right about that, either you are or you aren't."

"Or, somewhere in between."

o

"According to the 1998 ACIP recommendations for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, for routine vaccination, a first dose of MMR vaccine is recommended at ages 12 - 15 months and a second dose at ages 4 - 6 years," the guidelines state. "Two doses of MMR vaccine also are recommended for students attending colleges and other post-high school institutions. However, documentation of mumps immunity through vaccination has consisted of only 1 dose of mumps-containing vaccine for all designated groups, including health-care workers."

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Smoke, smoke, smoke those cigarettes, you have to die from something. I've never had the MMR vaccine, but I have had measles, mumps and German measles (rubella). I hope I'm immune; I'd hate to have them again. Excuse me while I cough myself to death. I switched to Kool's because the Marlboro's made me cough and the Kool's soothed my throat and lungs. So when the doc asked me if I'd quit smoking, I told him no, I switched to Kool's. You should have seen the look that got me. The attendance at AA meetings really dropped when they came up with no smoking meetings.

"Did you ever buy any of the Army Field Manuals?"

"Ron, I'm surprised, you'd ask. The answer is no because I didn't have to. While Derek was over there trying to get his butt shot off, I had a problem with my Army Knowledge Online account. I told him and he got it fixed. In the meantime I found out that all of the Army and Marine Field Manuals were Online. I copied what I wanted of the marine Field Manuals and when the AKO account was fixed, went online and started downloading pdf files. Every once in a while the FM would be classified and I couldn't download it. I copied the table of contents into a Word document and converted it to a pdf file. The first day I started, I got up to FM 2-22.31."

"What's that about?"

"The 40mm Grenade Launcher M203. That list was 18 pages long and I got the first 3 pages plus on the very first day. I don't have enough paper or toner to print 'em out. They won't even fit on a CD; I'd have to burn a DVD or possibly two."

"What good are they?"

"Since the war when we lost TV, I had to have something to read. Give me a couple more years and I'll have worked my way through all of them."

"Do you know any more now than you knew before?"

"Not really, but with this trick memory of mine and the Table of Contents, I can look up everything you ever wanted to know. For example, I have the FM on the M109A6 Paladin plus the FM that tells you how to use the 25mm cannon on the M-2s and M-3s."

"How much paper would it take?"

"I don't really know maybe 10 cases and 2 toner cartridges. Anyway, after I got them all downloaded, I tried to figure out what I couldn't download and went to Global Security and either downloaded the pdf files or copied the HTML files into word and converted them to pdf files. I think I have at least 90% of the Army Field Manuals."

"How long did it take?"

"A week at AKO and a several days at Global Security."

"Was it really worth it?"

"Who knows? The first time one of those FMs on my computer helps us to solve a problem; it might very well turn out to be worth the effort."

Ron grimaced and reached into his pocket. He extracted a small bottle of pills and put one under his tongue. He didn't explain, but he really didn't have to. I'd seen him take nitro before when he didn't think anyone was looking. He'd suffered from angina for as long as I had known him. As far back as late '05 or early '06, his doctor refused to do anymore balloon angioplasties. There had been some talk of a stent, but I didn't ask him if he'd had it done. A stent is a small, coiled wire-mesh tube that can be inserted into a blood vessel and expanded using a small balloon during a procedure called angioplasty. A stent is used to open a narrowed or clotted blood vessel, most often an artery in the heart. Newer stents are coated with a medication to more effectively prevent restenosis.

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About a week later, I'd stayed up late and slept in. Around 9am, Derek shook me awake.

"Hey, I was really sleeping. Why did you wake me?"

"I have some bad news, Dad. Ron Brown had a heart problem last night while he was sleeping and quietly passed away. I'm sorry."

"Hand me my robe, please, and let's get a cup of coffee so I can wake up. I can't really say I'm surprised, I saw him taking nitro last week."

"The doctor said that gadget he had implanted couldn't help him."

"That was a combination pacemaker/defibrillator. He's had that since 2005. Regular pacemakers usually last 4-8 years, but biventricular pacemakers that are combined with an ICD and do not tend to last as long (about 2-4 years). I don't know when he had it checked last. Hell, maybe he had a dead battery or a bad connection. Anyone say what was planned?"

"We can't do embalming and about the best we can do for a coffin is a plain pine box. I suppose they'll have the funeral tomorrow."

"He wouldn't want any speeches, probably just a simple prayer service and burial. I'll suggest that to Linda."

"She asked me if I knew where we could get a metal coffin."

"Not much point to that Derek, unless you embalm the body. Maybe they can dress the box up a little with some wood trim and stain it to look like mahogany."

"I'll see to that. Do you want an honor guard?"

"Just as pallbearers. He wasn't really military and probably wouldn't appreciate it. I'll ask. Get out of here so I can get cleaned up and go see her."

I took care of my morning routine and went to see Linda with Sharon. She was upset, but she said that they had been expecting this. I filled her in on the wooden coffin and asked about an honor guard. She said a simple Christian prayer service was what he wanted and no eulogy because he'd told his story 1,000 times. Since Derek was the really religious member of the family and we didn't have a minister, I asked him to do the prayer service. It also got me to thinking. I had always wanted cremation, but there wasn't a crematory and I wasn't a Viking. I suppose that meant I'd better pick out spots for Sharon and me to use when the time came.

Fort Navajo – Chapter 20

I don't like funerals, especially military funerals. They're ok right up to the 21-gun salute and the bugler blowing Taps. That part gives me the creeps. First you have the 3 volleys of 7 guns and then the mournful music. While there are no official lyrics, and the original version was purely instrumental, there have been several later lyrics added. The most common form is:

*Fading light dims the sight
And a star gems the sky, gleaming bright
From afar drawing nigh,
Falls the night.*

*Day is done, gone the sun
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky
All is well, safely rest;
God is nigh.*

*Then goodnight, peaceful night;
Till the light of the dawn shineth bright.
God is near, do not fear,
Friend, Goodnight.*

I was grateful to be spared that. Ron and I went back to October of '92, almost 21 years. For most of that time, he'd been my best friend (not counting my wife). She should outlive me, she's 4 years younger. And, for all of her ailments, none are particularly serious. A little controlled hypertension, a thyroid med and an antidepressant. We hadn't had drug insurance for her before and hadn't been able to afford the Avandia. We had it now and she took the same dose that I did, 4mg, BID. That totally controlled her mild diabetes. We also had moved her Prozac dose to 40mg.

For me, having Derek back from Iraq had allowed me to reduce my Zoloft back to 50mg. Having Ron show up when he did, didn't leave the friendship hanging. The blessings are there if you're willing to look for them. My paranoia over the state of the world had persuaded me to spend our money on the shelter and energy independence. Finally much of the research I'd done to lend credence to my fiction gave me a tremendous database of useful information on my computer. And that gave me value to the Diné Militia.

Damon's background in electronics had proven to be very valuable. He could keep all of our comm gear up and running. His bipolar disorder preceded his service in the Navy but it had gone unnoticed until one day when he was accused of gundecking the repair of a piece of comm gear. It was an intermittent failure that all of the ETs and been unable to locate and repair, him included. He was the last person to sign off on the equipment and shortly after it was reinstalled, it failed again. When a Chief accused him of gundecking he lost it and went after him. He was discharged from the Navy for a mental

condition. He was then and is now a very good electronics technician. The good part was that he eventually filed for a service connected disability and all of the records backed up his claim, not that it mattered now.

The reason the records backed up his claim was that I tried to talk him into the submarine service. He applied and they gave him the extensive psychological evaluations they give before they let you look at a sub. For whatever reason, probably that million dollar education, they rejected him for submarine service but kept him in the Navy. After the incident with the Chief, they pulled his records and started the paperwork. That is how it happened. That's was also Amy's diagnosis.

o

Someone made a simple marker for Ron's grave that said:

Ronald S. Brown
1941 – 2013
Husband, Father, Friend

I took Derek aside later and showed him the information available on my Hard Disc Drive. He showed up later with a box of blank DVDs and asked me to make him copies of all of the Documents in the My Documents folder. He had some free time and watched while I started to burn the DVDs.

"Are you planning on dying too?"

"Not that I'm aware of but I wanted you to know the information I'd assembled. We're clear on my possessions aren't we? You get all of the firearms except that Nazi .32. When Sharon is gone, that's yours too. You should probably divide our possessions among the four of you. You are welcome to my computer, large printer and office supplies for the Militia. I only have one Laredoan fast draw rig so you and Damon can decide who it fits best. You take the Ruger Vaqueros and give him the Colts. Those Rugers are built on the Blackhawk frame and will handle the Buffalo Bore ammo. I picked up an extra .45 Colt Winchester rifle so give that one to him and you take the one I bought."

"I have 2 ATVs and you can have that military model; it's older, but better suited for your militia related tasks. I written it all down and put copies in envelopes in my small fire safe. The combination is the first 2nd through 9th digits of my SSN and if you can't find it I wrote it on the bottom of my center desk drawer in whiteout (84-50-28-20). Let Sharon take whatever pills she wants from my medical supplies and give the remainder to the clinic. Damon has Rambo III and you can take First Blood for Mary and later Joshua. Those are the highlights. When Sharon is gone, move Lorrie into our house. There are several other things I've written down, but can't recall right now. Questions?"

"I can't think of any but I really don't want to talk about this."

"Derek, I'm 70 years old and won't live forever."

"I'll miss you."

"Thank you, but don't dig the grave just yet. Oh, what would you think if I gave the Tac-50 to Gunny?"

"He's good with it. It's yours so do what you want."

"I haven't made up my mind, yet. If I decide he should have it, I give it to him before I'm gone. What about the trip to Ventura"

"We can go anytime, have you made a list?"

"Yes, but you may not find everything I wrote down. I'll dig it out for you. You're going to think I'm crazy, but we have an uncertain future. Have you given any thought to possibly building a large day room where everyone can get together for celebrations, watching movies and the like?"

"Do you think we need one?"

"It might be a good idea. You can locate a popcorn machine, restaurant equipment and really deck it out. I'd recommend building it directly above that community shelter. I read somewhere that they had finally come up with a new engine for the Abrams tanks so you might want to track those down. They are a newer version the turbine they developed to the Crusader system. Hey, we're done with the copy. That was fast, I'd never used it before."

o

Ron's passing left a hole, indeed, a very large hole. Any fun there'd been in simply surviving the global thermonuclear war was gone. I suppose I was feeling sorry for myself and not counting my blessings. I thought back to what he and I had seen in the Antelope Valley and shuddered, it could have been us.

Fort Navajo was filling up. It was a trailer park for soldiers who all brought their equipment home with them. I cruised around the parapet watching what was going on down below. I heard the whine of the Skil saws, nails being hammered, a building coming together where none had existed before. It was the same size as the communal shelter, a simple one-story building with a few windows. It would become our assembly center, church and recreation area. I recalled some of my stories where The Three Amigos held court, but couldn't remember what I'd called our hideaways.

It had taken much longer than I thought it would to download those FM. When I started in on the Medical Manuals, I could get part of the manual downloaded and the computer

would lock up. Patience, the much needed virtue I needed when that happened was that I seemed to be totally lacking in. And now, I needed something to get my mind off everything that had happened since September 26, 2008. I suppose I could finish reading the Field Manuals I started but never finished. It really didn't seem important; I'd just forget it all by tomorrow.

There was a benefit to having a failing memory, someone would irritate me and a few minutes later I couldn't remember why I was mad. Another benefit of being up in my years was that I wouldn't be around to see what became of the country and the world. Perhaps I'd been too optimistic in my stories, my main characters seem to come out ok and end up rich. It was logical because they were always prepared for the end of civilization. Nobody could be that prepared; only Bill Gates had the money to do that.

Aside from the fact of where his home was located, he and his family were very well prepared with part of their home being earth sheltered. But then, he had \$150 million tied up in the home on Lake Washington. The Gates home is a modern design in the Pacific lodge style, with classic features such as a large private library with a domed reading room. The house occupied 50,000 square feet (4,600 m²) on a 5.15 acre lot. Garage space and outbuildings occupied an additional 16,000 square feet. Wiki said it had eight bedrooms and four building levels. They hadn't said what it cost, but it was assessed at \$125 million. Do you suppose Bill bought his food from Walton Feed? I can't picture him eating an MRE or picking up a rifle to defend his family.

We hadn't been prepared as well as I would have preferred, although we did have the shelter and some food, 10 one year deluxe supplies for 14 people. I thought we had a good location, but there was an airport in Winslow that could handle military aircraft, making nowheresville a target. Those data I occasionally gave in my stories about the effect of a 1mT ground burst always talked about how long it would take to return to being safe by US peacetime standards. That was far lower than what you could live with, 104mR per hour.

Ground bursts were useful to destroy a runway, but you needed an air burst to destroy a city. If you made a dirty bomb there would be some fallout even from an air burst. The reason that a dirty bomb was preferable was that a clean bomb (warhead) had less power. A tactical nuke could be small and clean, permitting soldiers or Marines to enter the area much earlier. If your purpose was to deny access to an area, a ground burst using a dirty bomb was far better. The bombs we used on Japan were relatively small at 20kT but they were dirty air bursts.

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"How many people have you fellas located, Derek?"

"Excluding the Indians, about 35,000."

"Is there any way to project how many people survived in this country from that?"

"I don't see how, Dad. It's worse than anyone thought. We didn't see anyone in California all the times we went there salvaging. I don't see how Arizona represents anything. All we've been able to conclude so far is that the large cities were hit along with airports capable of support military aircraft."

"When are you planning on going to Utah?"

"That's on hold for now. Why, do you want to go with us?"

"If I wouldn't be in the way, I sure would."

"You know people in Utah?"

"Some of the Squirrels lived there. I only know their handles, not their names. I was in Salt Lake City many times; I would like to see it again."

"It won't look like you remember it."

"Still, I would like to go."

"Do you feel up to it; you've been awfully distracted lately."

"I miss Ron. Sharon is busy making quilts for Christmas presents and that doesn't really interest me. I tried reading some of the Field manuals I have but lost interest."

"What Field Manuals?"

"When you were in Iraq, I went to AKO and downloaded all I could. Then I went to Global Security and got as many more as I could. There must be over a hundred."

"What do you have them on?"

"The Paladin, TOW missiles, Patriot missile system and the Bradley fighting vehicles plus some of the Marine Corps Field Manuals. I have an 18 page list, but not all of the books on the list."

"Did you print them out?"

"No. I'll show you where they are on the computer and you can select what you want to print out. It will take more paper and toner than I have to print them all."

"I'll scrounge up toner and paper, how much do you need?"

"The toner cartridge is good for about 30,000 copies or 6 cases of paper. I told Ron it would take at least 10 cases of paper."

"Where would I find a toner cartridge?"

"I have no idea; most office supply places didn't carry them because of the price."

"Expensive?"

"Close to \$300. It's a C8543X. You could get them from HP for \$270 plus tax and shipping. The genuine HP cartridges give you more copies because it has some kind of smart technology."

"How often do you need to put in a maintenance pack?"

"About every 600,000 copies. For home use, once or twice in a lifetime."

"Why did you buy the monster printer?"

"I screwed up. I became enchanted with the 50 pages per minute output and automatic duplexer. So, I goosed the memory to 384 MB and added a 5 GB HDD. It must finally be broken in, it doesn't jam very often. After I bought it, they cut the price in half."

"If that's the only stupid thing you did, you were lucky."

"I wish; it was more like a pattern. If I had a pocketful of money, I'd probably still be doing it."

"What would you buy?"

"I don't know; anything that tickled my fancy. If I could have anything I wanted at the moment it would be a Randall made knife."

"Which one?"

"The Model 2 *Fighting Stiletto* with an 8" blade."

"A knife? That's all you'd want?"

"It has more to do with getting something I've wanted since the sixties than anything else. I wanted the M1A for a very long time before I ever had one. The same goes for that .50 caliber, but I didn't have to wait as long for that. There are more expensive knives, it's not about what it costs, you know. I'd have settled for a Gerber at one time, but didn't have the money for that either, it would have cut into my drinking money."

"But you have the drinking out of your system, right?"

"No. That's why I asked you to lock up my liquor."

"Why did you buy it?"

"To have it. I did ok for a while, but then the world ended and I said screw it."

"Did you tell Ron?"

"I had to, you're only as sick as your secrets."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing, what could he say? He'd gotten within 3 days of 5 years once before he said screw it. He drank, it killed him and when they revived him and did the heart surgery, he never drank again."

"So he understood?"

"Every admitted alcoholic understands. The typical reaction is, *There, but for the grace of God, go I.*"

"Would you do it again?"

"If I said no, I'd be lying. So, I'll say maybe, it would depend on the circumstances. My saving grace might be I know what it does to me. On the other hand I might not care. I've been living on borrowed time for a while now and these past few years have been most revealing. I figured on China, but thought Russia knew better."

"You said you saw contrails."

"I did, it must have been a military formation. I hope they were ours."

o

Once the crops were in, the Brigade was split into 2 elements and one stayed in Winslow to protect the fort and the rest of us headed for Utah. When we got on I-15 and I persuaded them to stop at the gas station in Beaver. I explained that the guy used to sell popcorn in 50 pound bags from a trailer he kept parked there. It had been nearly 20 years, but some things never change. We broke the lock off the trailer and took all of the popcorn he had, 200 pounds. We checked and his storage tanks were empty. Although I had both my ALICE gear and my western style firearms, I was nothing more than an observer riding in the back seat of one of the Hummers.

There wasn't a lot to see along the I-15 corridor until we got about halfway up the state. Not until you get to Nephi, at least. From there on into Salt Lake City, we started to see the devastation. Whoever it was must have aimed a couple of MIRV'd missiles at the airport and downtown Salt Lake City. The last time I'd been to SLC, the Jazz were play-

ing in the Salt Palace. They must have built a new sports arena, Delta Center. The Salt Palace didn't look the same, I assume they tore it down and replaced it. It was hard to tell from the ruins. We had run into people south of Salt Lake and they seemed friendly enough. Of course, we made our intentions clear; we were trying to get a handle on survivors.

If I recall correctly, the Mormons had some wars of their own. They must have won; they had the whole state to themselves. I remember a friend in Des Moines who called the Mormons a cult. He was a fundamentalist Baptist; it was sort of like the pot calling the kettle black. Those folks who had survived were doing pretty well. About as close as we got to a survivor count was, 'a fair number'. They were gracious enough, but it seemed plain that they'd be happier if we were somewhere else. We packed up and headed home, having never gotten beyond first names.

We were certain that if people in Arizona and Utah had survived, there had to be others. I just sat in the back seat of the Hummer and listened, not because I didn't have anything to say, but because nobody seemed interested. As a child, I was told that children were to be seen and not heard. It seems when you get old enough, the same thing applies, or was it only me? If they decided to go anywhere else, I was going to stay home.

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Ron and I had 'our' song that we sung just to clown around, I'm sure you've heard it before:

Chorus:

*Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble
When you're perfect in every way
I can't wait to look in the mirror
Cause I get better lookin' each day
To know me is to love me
I must be a hell of a man
Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble
But I'm doin' the best that I can!*

*I used to have a girlfriend
But I guess she just couldn't compete
With all of these love-starved women
Who keep clamoring at my feet
Well I could probably find me another
But I guess they're all in awe of me
Who cares? I never get lonesome
Cause I treasure my own company.*

*Ohhhhhh.....
(chorus)*

*I guess you could say I'm a loner
A cowboy outlaw, tough and proud
Well, I could have lotsa friends if I wanted,
But then I wouldn't stand out from the crowd
Some folks say that I'm "egotistical",
Hell, I don't even know what that means!
I guess it has something to do with the way
That I fill out my skin-tight blue jeans*

All we ever sang was the chorus; it was all we could remember. Back in the '60s, I sort of liked the war protest songs, especially those of Peter, Paul and Mary. Who among you didn't want to drive his Chevy to the Levee? I couldn't, I never owned a Chevy.

I stay up late the first night we got home. I can't remember what I was dreaming of when my dream was interrupted. Standing inside a blinding bright box of light was my partner, Ron. He was saying something and I struggled to listen. "Hey Gar-Bear, they have AA in heaven too, and you're the featured speaker tonight."

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